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SOCIETY  
NOVELETTES.



**SOCIETY NOVELETTES.**





HARCOURT RECOGNIZES THE ORIGINAL OF HIS PHOTOGRAPH



# SOCIETY NOVELETTES

BY

F. C. BURNAND, H. SAVILE CLARK, R. E. FRANCILLON,  
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OWN CHÂTEAU," &c.

ILLUSTRATED WITH NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS,

FROM DESIGNS BY R. CALDECOTT, LINLEY SAMBOURNE, M. E. EDWARDS, F. DADD,  
ADELAIDE CLAXTON, A. CORBOULD, M. KEARNS, DOWER WILSON, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

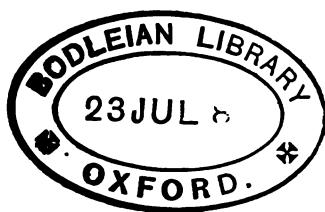
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# SOCIETY NOVELETTES.

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## THE DOVE'S NEST.

A Dramatic Novelette.

IN TWO ACTS.

BY JOSEPH HATTON.

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### ACT I.

SCENE I.—MY LORD HAWK  
AND LADY DOVE.

E stand in the picturesque grounds of Dove's Nest, a charming villa pleasantly placed among the trees of Regent's Park. Old Lord Dove, who had noble estates in the neighbourhood of Dovedale, in Derbyshire, gave his pretty town house the fanciful title of Dove's Nest when his daughter was born. He was a jolly old boy, one of a host of jolly old boys who have died honourable deaths in India. Lady Dove, a charming young woman of twenty (as pretty as André's famous picture of that illustrious Dove of Amsterdam who, as the wife of Christian II., ruled the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway with a gentle feminine sway), is the sole

remaining representative of her family. She is the ward of Mr. Partridge, a gentleman of unblemished reputation and forty-five.

Having learnt thus much from the bill of the play, I repeat that we stand in the picturesque grounds of Dove's Nest. It is a pleasant summer morning. You can hear the children at play in the park. The ducks are splashing their wings in the ornamental water. Two rude boys are throwing stones at them, and some city arabs are swearing at a Ladies' School which is out for an airing. This will be altered when the police succeed the present park-keepers, who switch the hours away with slender canes, and are more killing among nursery-maids than the 2nd Life Guards. The pretty residence of the pretty Lady Dove was originally in the park itself. When the original proprietors fenced it off they selected a few acres of sweet grass to surround it, with a bit of effective undulation that was easily converted into a sunk fence. Outside this, clumps of trees shut in the nest, and the birds sing there for the first time in every new year.

On this bright summer morning two gentlemen enter the grounds at the southern gate. One is a young man dressed in the highest style of modern fashion—a well-fitting morning coat and grey trousers, a crimson neck-tie, a faultless glossy hat, a pair of lavender gloves, and patent leather boots. He is a fair young man, with a long drooping moustache, blue eyes, and white teeth, which are prominent when he laughs ; and whenever he does laugh he drops from his eye and again replaces a round disk of glass which is fastened to his button-hole. He walks with all his limbs, his legs, arms, shoulders, and hips. His companion is a rubicund old gentleman, with a suggestion of gout in his right leg, and a suggestion of old port in his nose. He wears a blue frock coat and snuff-coloured trousers. His hair is white, and his laugh loud and boisterous.

"Get the business over at once, uncle—yes, get it over," says young Lord Hawk, plucking a rose, and planting it in his coat.

"That is my intention, Arthur," says the old gentleman, Sir Charles Turkeycock; "but I never take the word of young fellows with regard to women."

"No, and why not, uncle?"

"Conceited puppies; they are all alike; think every woman is in love with them."

"It is not a question of love," drawled the young man, "we have got over that rot; it is a matter of mutual convenience."

"Oh, that is it, is it? That's the modern style. Then I'm deuced glad I was a young fellow when men and women loved each other and were not ashamed to own it."

"Innocent, good old boy you are, uncle! We spoon now, you see, we don't love. Harriet is sweet on me, and we shall get on well."

"Yes, with the aid of her twenty thousand a year, you rascal."

"Yes, yes, that will keep us going; like to be kept going."

"I'm your uncle, Arthur, and I loved your father like a man; but, by Jove, I hate your modern style of young men, with their cynical manner and their music-hall gait."

"Good old boy; you will not make me angry, because I know your—your thingumy—your heart, I mean—is in the right place. 'His heart was true to Poll;' you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean. I learnt quite enough the night I condescended to accompany you on a round of the music-halls, with your 'Down among the coals' and your 'Old Brown's daughter.' Bah! Comic songs! No wonder the drama has gone to the dogs."

"No, there you are wrong, Sir Charles. The drama has not gone to the dogs, the dogs have gone to the drama; the jolly

dogs find their songs and their ballets on the stage now, and so they patronise the drama, don't you know, you—see the joke?"

"Joke! No, 'pon my soul, I don't," exclaims Sir Charles Turkeycock. "I see Partridge coming through the conservatory."

Enter Mr. Partridge, a bright-eyed, sprightly bachelor, in a velvet house-coat and checked trousers.



"Ah, Mr. Partridge," exclaims Sir Charles Turkeycock, with a flourish of his left wing (I mean his left hand). "How are you?"

"How do you do, Sir Charles?" responds Mr. Partridge, bowing at the same time to Lord Hawk's eye-glass.

"You are looking as young as a spring day, Mr. Partridge," says Sir Charles; "some of our young swells of five-and-twenty are nowhere to you."

"Ease and contentment keep a man young; but grey hairs come even to tranquillity," says Mr. Partridge.

"Why don't you marry, Partridge?" says Sir Charles; "it's a duty we all owe to the sex."

"I'm too old to fulfil the duty now," says Partridge; "and if I were not, I never met a woman who would have me."

"You never popped, that's clear," says Lord Hawk, "or, by Jove, you'd have seen how you would have been snapped up; but, talking of popping, uncle, let us get on with business."

"Well, I suppose you have no objection to tie up your ward, Lady Dove, though you have slipped the collar yourself?" says Sir Charles, laughing in a gobbling, turkeycock fashion, making gurgling sounds something like a rapid decanting of port.

"On the contrary," says Mr. Partridge. "She came out last season, and I hope to see her ladyship worthily disposed of before she goes back again into Derbyshire in August."

"Her father, I have heard you say, advised her marrying at one-and-twenty, and recommended this to you in your exercise of wardship."

"He did," says Mr. Partridge, "and I am the more desirous to obey him scrupulously, as she will be in every way a most valuable acquisition to the gentleman who wins her. Not to mention her fortune, which is the least consideration, her sentiments are worthy of her birth; she is gentle, modest, amiable, and accomplished. ['Prosy brute,' interpolates Lord Hawk, looking at his boots, for he has heard that the Duke of Cambridge looks at his boots when he is in deep thought.] In a word, Sir Charles, I never saw youth more amiable or more modest; but perhaps I am a little partial to the lady."

"No, no," says Sir Charles, "she is a delicious creature—everybody says so; but something has happened, Mr. Partridge, that you are perhaps not aware of."

"What, pray?"

"My nephew, Lord Hawk——"

"Here I am, at your service," says young Hawk, interrupting

his uncle, and switching a rosebud off a standard with his gold-headed cane. "My uncle is not quite happy in explanations ; the fact is, sir, your ward, Lady Dove——"

"Get away, you rascal," says Sir Charles Turkeycock, striking the gravelled walk with his stick ; "get away, Lord Hawk, I will not be interrupted."

"Now, Sir Charles, none of your military exercise here, there's a dear old boy ; pardon me, Mr. Partridge, your ward is a most accomplished lady, and——"

"Thou art a most accomplished coxcomb," exclaims Sir Charles.

"Nay, Sir Charles," interposes Mr. Partridge, "let his lordship speak."

"Thank you, Partridge, thank you," says Lord Hawk, letting his eye-glass fall from his eye, and pulling out his diamond linked shirt cuffs. "My uncle is a dear old boy—very, don't you know ; but I ought to ask pardon for the young lady. We are both very young, I admit it was not right, don't you know, to conceal the affair from you ; but there, I see Sir Charles is getting savage, and I'll say no more about it. I'll take a walk in the garden and smoke a weed, and leave Sir Charles to finish. Have a weed, Partridge ?"

"No, thank you ; I do not smoke until evening."

"Evening so," remarks my lord, turning away ; "Even so—good pun ; we'll send that to Staggers, the burlesquist, as he calls himself."

"Not a bad fellow for the present age of puppies," says Sir Charles, when Lord Hawk had lighted his cigar and disappeared. "To be plain with you, Mr. Partridge, Hawk and Lady Dove have done some severe flirtation ; they like each other ; to be plain, they are in love, as the saying is."

"Indeed !" exclaims Mr. Partridge ; "let us walk a little ; will you go into the house ?"

"No, thank you," says Sir Charles, taking Partridge's arm.

"This is a surprise," says Partridge. "I don't really know why my ward should conceal the matter from me ; I have assured her over and over again, that I would never oppose her inclination, though I might endeavour to direct it."

"Human nature," says Sir Charles, with his gobble-gobble laugh ; "human nature—young people will be young" (gobble-gobble). "We are always so ashamed of our first passion, that we would willingly hide it from ourselves" (gobble-gobble)—"human nature sir ; but will you mention my noble nephew to her, Mr. Partridge ?"

"I must beg your pardon, Sir Charles," says Mr. Partridge, gravely ; "the name of the gentleman whom she chooses for a husband, must first come from herself ; my advice or importunity shall never influence her. If guardians were less rigorous, young people would be more reasonable ; and I am so unfashionable as to think that happiness in marriage cannot be bought with money."

"You are right, Partridge, you are right ; but here comes the lady. 'Pon my soul, she is a glorious creature !"

Enter Lady Dove from conservatory, attended by her maid, Miss Perkee. Her ladyship wears a pale sea-green silk ; a light Indian shawl is thrown loosely round her shoulders ; her hair, a sunny brown, is bound about her head in massive folds ; she is fair, and round, and tall, and her long eye-lashes droop over her blue eyes, and no wonder she drove society wild when she came out last season. There is a dove-like softness in her manner ; she walks daintily, as doves walk, and her ankle is clasped by a bright bit of leather that surmounts the proudest and crispest little red heel. Miss Perkee, her maid, is a short, sharp, slim little, dark-eyed woman, who makes two hundred a year out of her ladyship's cast-off clothes, and informs her ladyship of all the peccadilloes of the upper servants.

When Lady Dove sees that Mr. Partridge is talking to a gentleman, she is about to retire, but Partridge speaks to her.

"Permit me to introduce Sir Charles Turkeycock to your ladyship?"

Sir Charles bows. The lady bows.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Sir Charles before," says Lady Dove.

"Then I suppose your ladyship understands the nature of Sir Charles' visit?" says Mr. Partridge.

"Sir!" responds the lady, in confusion, and drawing her shawl round her shoulders like a pair of soft, tender wings.

"You may trust me," says Mr. Partridge in a gentle and most kindly tone; "pray do not be disturbed! I shall not reproach you with anything more than keeping your wishes from me."

"Upon my word, Mr. Partridge——"

There is no knowing what her ladyship intends to say. She finishes what is evidently a broken sentence, and calls her maid.

"Pray excuse me, gentlemen," she says, and takes Miss Perkee aside.

"We have gone too far, Sir Charles," says Mr. Partridge; "we must excuse her delicacy, and give her time to recover. I had better talk with her alone; we will leave her now. Be sure that no endeavour shall be wanting on my part to bring this affair to a happy conclusion."

"Thank you, Mr. Partridge; it will be an honour and a pleasure both to the Hawks and the Turkeycocks to be associated with the rich and noble house of Dove."

"You do the Doves honour, Sir Charles."

The two gentlemen walk, and talk, and bow to each other amidst a profusion of mutual compliments and courtesies; and we leave them to their friendly exercises, while we open a new chapter, as the exigencies of the story, rather than the dramatic necessities of the piece, require.

## SCENE II.—A DREADFUL SITUATION.

LADY DOVE and her maid, Miss Perkee, were on particularly familiar terms. The maid was the daughter of an old friend of the late lord's, who had, through misfortune, been reduced in circumstances. Miss Perkee was a sharp, clever, little woman, and Lady Dove was in the habit of paying great respect to her judgment.

They are walking and talking in a part of the grounds which is more secluded than the lawn upon which the curtain rose in the first scene.

"Rely upon it, your ladyship," said Miss Perkee, "that Lord Hawk's uncle has been making a proposition for your hand in marriage."

"Pray do not bother me about Lord Hawk," says the lady.

"But why not?" responds the maid; "though he is a little fast, loves to hear himself talk——"

"Drawl, you mean," interpolates the lady.

"To hear himself drawl," continues the maid, "you cannot say he is not handsome; besides, he keeps excellent society; it is true he is rather conceited, all good-looking gentlemen are."

"But if I can find one without these faults, Lucy, I may surely please myself."

"Without these faults!" exclaims the maid; "and is he young?"

"He is modest, good, polite, affable, generous, manly," says the lady with enthusiasm. "He charms from the natural impulses of his own heart, as much as others disgust by their senseless airs and intolerable affectation."

"Upon my word, my lady," says the maid. "But why have

you kept this so long a secret? Your guardian is kindness itself; what difficulty can you apprehend?"

"The difficulty of declaring my sentiments," replies the lady.

"Shall I undertake the task? But who is the honoured and fortunate gentleman? He must have very little penetration, not to have discovered his happiness in your eyes."

"Ah, Lucy," says the lady, "I take care that my eyes do not



tell too much, and he has too much gentlemanly delicacy to interpret looks to his advantage. Moreover, I fear he would not respond to my love; I fear he would disapprove of it; and if I should let out my secret, and find no return of my affection, I should die with shame."

"I will insure your life for a puff-box," says Miss Perkee, promptly. "What can possibly prevent your coming together?"

"His great excess of merit," says her ladyship, with a real and unaffected sigh.

"His excess of fiddlestick!" says the maid, warmly; "excuse my earnestness. Your ladyship is absurdly bashful and modest;

you shall trust me with the secret ; I will then tell it to half a dozen friends, and they will intrust it to half a dozen more. By this means it will travel over half the town in a week ; the gentleman will soon hear of it, and then if he is not at your feet in a twinkling, I will give up my perquisites at your wedding. Tell me his name ? ”

“ Indeed, I cannot tell you his name ; I wish I could,” says the lady.

“ Doesn’t my lady know it ? ”

“ Too well, too well.”

“ Then, why fear to tell it ? ”

“ The disclosure would cause me to be regarded as eccentric.”

“ To keep it secret will.”

“ And why should I be ashamed to discover my love ? ”

“ Why, indeed ? ” urges Miss Perkee, her whole soul on the very tiptoe of expectation ; on which account she hates Mr. Partridge for appearing at that very moment, and asking her ladyship if he may have a word with her.

Lady Dove said he might, and Miss Perkee therefore retired, writhing in an agony of disappointment.

“ She is afraid I shall not approve of her choice,” thinks Mr. Partridge, with the foppish figure of Lord Hawk in his mind’s eye.

“ What can I possibly say to him ? ” is the awkward reflection of her ladyship.

“ My dear Lady Dove,” says Mr. Partridge, “ do not imagine for a moment that I would know more of your thoughts than you desire I should ; but the position which I occupy towards your ladyship gives me a sort of right to your confidence. Some friends have lately spoken to me about——but that is not all ; I have lately found you evidently disturbed in mind—pray be plain with me—has not some one been happy enough to please your fancy ? —to—to——”

Mr. Partridge finds it more difficult to be round with her ladyship than he thought.

"I cannot deny it, sir," replies Lady Dove, blushing; "but I entreat you not to listen to idle friends, or to inquire further into the particulars of my inclination."

"But, my dear," says Mr. Partridge, "have you made a choice?"

"In my own mind, sir, yes," her ladyship answers; "and it is impossible to make a better—reason, honour, everything, must approve it."

"And how long is it since you came to this conclusion?"

"Ever since I left the country to come to town," she replies, sighing.

"I see the subject embarrasses you, my dear," says Mr. Partridge, with manly consideration. "I will try and relieve you of this natural confusion—I am informed of the whole matter."

"Sir!" exclaims Lady Dove.

"Pray do not be uneasy; I am in a position to assure you that your passion is returned with equal tenderness."

"If you are not deceived, I cannot be more happy," says Lady Dove.

"No, I think I am not deceived. After the declaration you have made and the answers I have given you, why do you still keep your love a secret? Have I not deserved your confidence, after all these years?"

"You have, indeed, Mr. Partridge," says Lady Dove, "and should certainly have it, were I not fully convinced in my own mind that you would oppose my wishes."

"I oppose them! This is unkind! Can you doubt my affection for you, my devotion? Is it necessary for me to say that I have no will but yours?"

Mr. Partridge is evidently hurt; he looks appealingly at his ward.

"Then I will endeavour to explain myself," she says; "pray do not think me ungrateful."

"Speak, my dear lady, my dear ward."

"If I do speak, and tell you all, I feel that I shall never be able to speak to you again. No, it must not be," says her ladyship, turning as if to leave the spot.

"Nay, your ladyship, you must speak—be sure I shall agree with you in everything."

"Indeed you will not," says Lady Dove, turning upon him with a strange light in her eyes; "pray let me retire—I am not well."

"My poor sensitive ward!" says Mr. Partridge, taking her hand and drawing her arm in his, "let me conduct you in; I see your delicacy is alarmed. If you will only confide in me, and tell me his name, believe me, I will go to him at once and tell him that my consent shall be given and——"

"You will easily find him," says her ladyship: "and pray, my dear guardian, tell him how unfair it is for a young lady to have to speak first; persuade him to spare me and to relieve me from such a terrible situation. I should desire this, even were I a queen, and compelled to disclose my love first. Besides, it is not even leap year. I shall leave him to you, my dear sir!"

By this time they have reached the lawn, where Lord Hawk is observed in calm contemplation of his boots—tapping them gently with his cane. "Here he is," thinks Mr. Partridge, "waiting for his answer, no doubt; this fully explains the riddle!"

"Ah! my lady," drawls Lord Hawk, taking a parting glance at his boots, just as the Duke is said to do; "feared you had gone into the park!"

"I shall not ride to-day," says Lady Dove, with a gentle inclination of her head.

"Very glad to hear it," says his lordship. "How do, Partridge? What a pleasant languid sort of day it is!"

"Beautiful weather," says Mr. Partridge, bent on escaping into the house, that he may leave the lovers to themselves.

"What a dreadful situation I am in!" remarks the lady, half to herself, half aloud.

Lord Hawk hears, and interprets the remark.

"It will come all right," whispers Lord Hawk, encouragingly—"trust me, I will get over Partridge."

Lord Hawk looks out of his light eyes at Mr. Partridge, and shows his white pearly teeth. Mr. Partridge takes the hint at once.

"Lord Hawk," says Mr. Partridge solemnly, "my lady's will is law to me; as for you sir, the friendship which I have always had for your uncle, Sir Charles, will have the greatest weight with me!"

Lady Dove looked sorely distressed.

"My dear lady, let me lead you to a seat," says Lord Hawk; and before the lady can reply, he has taken her hand, and she suffers herself to be conducted to a pretty tented seat under a chestnut at the extremity of the lawn. The last sweet bloom of the tree is upon the grass, making a floral carpet of pink and white, bordered with emerald. "I am the happiest fellow going," says Lord Hawk, crushing the pinky blossom under the pinky heels of his patent leather boots.

"I shall die of confusion," thinks Lady Dove, looking all the embarrassment she feels.

Mr. Partridge, approaching her, says, "Be calm, my lady—Harriet, as I had the privilege of calling you when you were a child."

"Do not relinquish a privilege which is to me a pleasure," replies the lady, looking up into his face with her quiet, tender, loving eyes.

"Lord Hawk, her ladyship is very sensitive, see you are gentle and considerate ; meanwhile I will go and meet your uncle; I think I heard his cab trotting up the drive ten minutes since—he is in the house by this time."

"Mr. Partridge," says Lady Dove, as if bent on preventing his departure.

"I will return presently," he replies, and then, stooping over her, he whispers, "Have courage, it shall all be as you wish. I quite understand your beautiful nature, my Harriet—having no mother to confide in, only a stupid old fellow like me ! but no matter—have a good heart."

And he is gone—gone, as he says, to meet Lord Hawk's uncle.

"There !" exclaims Lord Hawk, sitting beside her ladyship. "Glad he's gone at last. Quite agree with you, this is better than riding in the park, getting hot, and dusty, and thirsty. And now, my dear Lady Dove, I may say, Harriet——"

"Sir," replies the lady, "will you have the goodness to explain the meaning of this familiarity ? What riddle are we all trying to solve ?"

"Riddle—familiarity !" exclaims Lord Hawk, looking at his boots. "Surely everything is plain enough—we shall ride together during the season, spoon, flirt, meet accidentally by appointment, be seen twice at the opera together ; finally, grand service at Hanover Square, have a bishop or two called in, breakfast at the Nest here, given by Partridge, a run over the Continent, and then take our part in the married scandal of the town. 'Dost thou like the picture ?'"

Lady Dove does not speak.

"You ought to say, 'My own dear love !' that's in the play."

"You are playing the fool, Lord Hawk," says her ladyship, now in a paroxysm of indignation ; "but it is my own fault, I suppose."

"Very good—shall give that to a fellow I know who writes burlesques. Partridge said I was to expect some eccentricity, but, really, Harriet——"

"Sir! your manners are hardly the manners of a gentleman! Do you tell me that you have spoken to my guardian on the supposition that——"

"Of course, I have, and it is all right. Guardian consents, and uncle consents. Why then, Lady Dove, continue this mock modesty, this 'false shame,' as they call it at the theatre?"

Lord Hawk had been prepared to expect some peculiarities in the lady's manner, owing to the exceptional character of her bringing up and position; but he is hardly prepared to see her rise and blaze out at him as she does now.

"Lord Hawk! you have made a serious and ridiculous mistake. Before you obtained the consent of others to take my hand, you should have secured mine!"

"But really, 'pon my soul," says his lordship, looking at the lady for the first time with something like earnestness, "this is odd—you are not serious, don't you know?"

"I was never more so, and I beg——"

"But, really, if it is only because I asked them first, don't you know, I am sorry. I did that because I knew how bashful you were about it, and that you were sorry it was not leap year, you know, and all that."

Lord Hawk is nearly serious and in earnest.

"Sir, pray be assured that I never entertained the smallest idea concerning you, that, that——"

Lady Dove is too indignant to give vent to all she feels and desires to say.

"Words, words!"

"They are true. Pray do not make yourself ridiculous, Lord Hawk."

"Don't make yourself miserable."

"I am only so when you persist in annoying me."

"And now you think you don't love me?"

"Love you! No! now nor never!"

"You hate me?" says his lordship, conceitedly drawing himself up to his full height, to display his manly figure, as much as to say—Now confess at once, and fall into these arms.

"Yes, I hate you," she replies, stamping her foot upon the chestnut flowers.

"Poor dear Lady Dove! I am really sorry for you—the peculiarity of your nature must make you quite a slave. She never told her love, but stood on a monument, and let it feed on her damask cheek! never thought that had anything in common with nature before—try and conquer it, Harriet!"

"Leave me, sir! I command you—leave this place!"

It is fortunate that just at this moment Sir Charles Turkeycock and Mr. Partridge came upon the scene; they have discussed the situation in Mr. Partridge's private room, and are now quite prepared to make the young people happy. They meet her ladyship walking towards the house; they see her turn her back upon Lord Hawk, who is looking after her, and smiling as if he were intensely amused.

"Harriet," says Mr. Partridge, "you are annoyed—what can this mean? I never saw you so much agitated."

"Mr. Partridge," replies the lady, tears in her eyes, "you have been in error concerning me. I did not undeceive you, because I could not have imagined that the consequences would be so serious. But I am now compelled to tell you that you have misunderstood me, and that you have greatly distressed me."

"How, my dear, how?"

"What does her" (gobble-gobble) "ladyship mean?" asks Sir Charles Turkeycock, looking from one to the other, and then turning quickly upon Lord Hawk with the same question, his lordship having sauntered up to them meanwhile.

"My lady is pleased to be a little out of humour with me," says Lord Hawk, winking slyly at his uncle and Partridge; "but it becomes her—I like a little temper, a little coquettishness."

"Oh, oh ! ah, ah !" (gobble-gobble) laughs Sir Charles ; "that's all—a lovers' quarrel. Storms of this kind" (gobble-gobble) "rarely upset the lovers' boat."

"They call it the Husbands' Boat at Margate," says Lord Hawk.

"Ah, ah ! so they do" (gobble-gobble) ; "saw it leave one morning, for amusement.—Yes. Hope you two will soon be rowing in the husbands' boat" (gobble-gobble).

"Don't be uneasy, my dear," says Mr. Partridge ; "be consistent, lest you be thought capricious!"

"Mr. Partridge, your remarks make me doubly miserable !"

"Pray explain, my dear lady ; explain this riddle !"

"I cannot, sir ; let me go in—I have surely discovered the meaning of the riddle ; and your unkind interpretation of it, and your reproachful looks, show me that I have already said too much. I must go, sir."

Mr. Partridge walks by her side, opens the door, and watches her disappear along the hall, and up the beautiful Italian staircase, towards her own room.

"But look here ; this is going too far. What have you said to her?" Sir Charles asks, raising his stick with an authoritative air, and tossing his comb—I mean his head—with dignity.

"I never saw her so moved before," says Mr. Partridge, putting his hands into his pockets and looking sorely puzzled.

"'Pon my soul, gentlemen, you are not more surprised than I am. The little storm arose on her insisting that she had no *penchant* for me at all. Of course I knew her secret, and for a time humoured this ; but when she assured me she did not love me, and all that sort of thing, don't you know, what was I to say?"

"Now, look here, Arthur," says Sir Charles, raising his eloquent stick again on his right wing, and frowning heavily under his big eye-brows; "there is a kind of cheek and impudence and assurance about your manner that I have often spoken to you about—a sort of d—d self-satisfaction, that if I were a young girl, and especially an heiress to boot, I would not put up with" (gobble-gobble-gobble); "damit, sir, your airs would surfeit me!"

"But you are not a young lady, you see; and pardon me for thinking that young ladies prefer my style. But what can the lady mean? I have given proof of my affection; I have offered her marriage."

"That's right, that's proper, truly," says Sir Charles; "but your manner is so infernally foppish."

"I confess I am much puzzled—every thing I see and hear is so contradictory. She cannot like anyone else?" says Mr. Partridge.

"No. I'll answer for that," says Lord Hawk, caressing his boots with his cane, dropping and replacing his eye-glass, and drawing out his wristbands.

"She may doubt your sincerity—perhaps she thinks you may neglect her after marriage?"

"Dare say—touch of jealousy, too, in her natural sensibility. Most sensitive young lady ever met, and prettiest; yes, begad, she is a lovely girl!"

"Perhaps the evident violence of her reproaches may arise from the lukewarm expression of your passion?"

"No, *je vous demande pardon*; I have sworn she shall be the happiest of her sex, and planned out our honeymoon. Can only think, as they have it in some play, that her present humour arises out of an over-fond heart being doubtful of its own happiness."

Lord Hawk looks round triumphantly, and Sir Charles cannot

restrain a feeling of admiration for his nephew, whom he has never seen so sprightly and energetic before. His lordship, for the time being, has quite thrown off his usual drawling manner.

"Pray, gentlemen, may I inquire what you have been doing to my mistress?" asks Miss Perkee, tossing her head and looking defiantly at everybody.

"I must inquire into this painful business," remarks Mr. Partridge.

"Her ladyship desires me to say that presently she wishes to see you, sir."

"I will attend her ladyship," replied Mr. Partridge; "pray tell her so at once."

Miss Perkee thereupon retires, and Lord Hawk hums a tune from Offenbach's latest opera.

"Poor dear lady! I would give a leg or an arm, old as I am, to be loved by that sweet creature as thou art, Arthur" (gobble-gobble), said Sir Charles Turkeycock.

"And throw in the gout and rheumatism, you old beau!" says Lord Hawk. "You dear old Adonis, I believe you would like a young wife now, if the truth were really known."

"I don't think you appreciate your good fortune in that direction as you ought; you are so infernally conceited" (gobble-gobble); "but that is the characteristic of the present age. Would to heaven thou wert not such a dandy, Arthur. 'Pon my soul," (gobble) "Partridge, I believe the great hulking fellow wears stays—did you ever see such a waist? But marriage will cure him of all these noodle's tricks. 'Confound it! when I was young and in love——'

"Ah, ah!" drawls Hawk, who has recovered all his self-possession now, and is therefore master of his drawl, his wristbands, his eye-glass, and his bodily action from the waist; "a pretty figure you must have cut, dear old uncle!"

"Look here," observes Mr. Partridge, with gravity; "a truce

to this nonsense. If Lady Dove's affections declare for you, she must not be treated with neglect, as a conquered victim. A Lady in her own right, the daughter of a noble house, the daughter of my own dear friend, I could not bear to see her unhappy—as she would be with any man who could not devote himself to her, who would not consider that in winning her love he was blessed above all others. Peculiarly sensitive and bashful, she must have every consideration that a high-minded and delicate, tender, confiding lady claims at the hands of a true and loving husband."

"Bravo!" exclaims Sir Charles; "a noble speech, brave, manly sentiments! Nephew, go to her, throw yourself at her feet, and vow your eternal and lasting devotion, you rascal" (gobble-gobble).

Sir Charles brandishes his stick, and gets very red in the face.

"Sir, I must respectfully decline," drawls Hawk, letting his eye-glass drop with artistic effect. "Would you have me repeat what I have already said? Been on my knees once" (then he dusts his knees with a white silk handkerchief, which he seems to have accidentally discovered in one of his pockets). "No, uncle, it is my turn to be piqued now."

"You conceited ass!" roars Sir Charles. "I can stand this no longer."

"I am sorry to find that any young lady should bestow her heart where there is so little prospect of its being valued at its true worth," says Mr. Partridge. "However if she is bent on this match I shall not oppose her; but I must be excused for expressing my regret if it should be so. Gentlemen, good evening!"

"'Pon my soul, I am sorry to agree with you; but he will improve, Partridge; do all you can for my sake; give mine and my nephew's assurances that we are hers devotedly" (gobble-gobble) says Sir Charles; "and good morning, my friend."

"Yes, good morning, Partridge," says Hawk, addressing his boots; "we will look in again and see how you have progressed —*au revoir!*"

"Arthur," says Sir Charles, when Partridge is out of hearing, "I could knock you down for a fool—trifling with fortune in this way; you deserve to be" (gobble-gobble) "stranded wifeless, and without a penny, on some desert island."

"In the middle of the ornamental water," says Hawk, "with a claret cup and a cigar: shouldn't mind it at all. Come along, dear old nunky; come along, Sir Charles—it is all right, don't fear."

Hawk takes Sir Charles forcibly by the arm, invites himself to another cup of tea in the words of the royal hero of "Geneviève de Brabant," and, half an hour afterwards, the two are cantering down the Row with aristocratic complacency.





## ACT II.

## SCENE I.—MY LADY'S SECRET.

**S**CENE—a Library. The windows overlook a green bit of park and a clump of delicious foliage. You are almost inclined to exclaim as you look out, “Can this be London?” But you do not make such an unnecessary observation, because you know you are inside the Dove’s Nest, Regent’s Park.

The library is furnished with taste and judgment—oak and green cloth, Turkey carpet, bronzes, a few oil paintings, and flowers upon each window-sill.

“Tell my lady I am here at her service,” says Mr. Partridge to a servant; “if she pleases, I will wait upon her in her own room.”

The servant bows and goes out.

Mr. Partridge, turning over some letters, talks to himself. Here are his words.

“Her conduct, certainly, to me appears very mysterious; but it is to be explained, no doubt. This young gentleman has evidently touched her heart, and her modesty confuses her so much that she will not avow it. She says she dislikes him; I am told that is how love begins with women. Yet Harriet is a girl of understanding, clever, well educated,—what can it all mean? Here she comes.”

"I hope you are not vexed at my leaving you so abruptly, and without an apology," says the lady.

"It vexes me to think that you consider an apology necessary. The subject we were considering was of such a delicate nature, that I was more pleased with your natural confusion than I should have been with your excuses."

"I have reflected, sir," says Lady Dove, taking a seat near the library table, and near a magnificent statuette of Hercules, "that the person for whom I have conceived a very tender regard may, from the wisest motives, doubt my passion; therefore I would endeavour to answer all his objections, and convince him that he is deserving of my highest esteem and my most sincere love."

"I do not as yet comprehend what kind of dispute can have arisen between yourself and Lord Hawk," replies Mr. Partridge, looking into his ward's blushing face; "I would advise reconciliation."

"He still continues in his strange error!" thinks Lady Dove.

"Shall I indulge the liberty of telling you, my dear," says Mr. Partridge, taking her hand, which is hot and tremulous, and causes him to remark, "You tremble, Lady Dove—what is the matter?"

"Nothing, sir," she replies; "go on."

"I guess what causes you this uneasiness; you fear that society will not be so readily convinced of Lord Hawk's merit as you are; and, indeed, I could wish him more deserving of you; but your regard for him gives the young nobleman a merit which otherwise he would have wanted, and almost makes me blind to his failings."

"And would you, sir, advise me to make choice of this gentleman?"

"I would advise you, as I always have done, my dear ward, to consult your own heart."

"If that is how you advise, I will most religiously follow it; and

for the last time, I am determined to discover my real sentiments ; but as a confession of my love will not become me and is, indeed, foreign to my bashful nature, I have been thinking of some innocent stratagem to spare my blushes, and in part relieve me from the shame of a declaration—might I not be permitted to write to him, for example ? ”

“ Yes, I think you may write your sentiments without impropriety ; and, indeed, you ought to explain yourself ; your late misunderstanding, in fact, makes it absolutely necessary that you should do so.”

“ Will you assist me ? In short, will you be my amanuensis —will you write the letter for me ? ”

“ Most willingly,” says Mr. Partridge ; “ and the fact that you, in a measure, make me a party to the letter, will remove any objection that could arise as to the propriety of the course you are adopting.”

Lady Dove rises from her seat and sighs. Mr. Partridge sits down before a blotting pad and takes up a pen. Lady Dove is conscious that her heart is beating wildly.

“ Now, my dear, I am ready,” says Mr. Partridge.

“ I wish I were,” says Lady Dove, walking to the window and back again.

“ Don’t be disturbed,” says Mr. Partridge ; “ Lord Hawk is not a man that you should be nervous about ; and if he has his faults, time and your own influence will soon correct them.”

“ Give me a moment to think,” says the lady, looking at her guardian with a despairing glance.

“ A hundred, my dear,” says Partridge, looking up at her through his clear, modest eyes.

“ Now I am ready. Say, ‘ *It is vain for me to conceal from one of your understanding the real secret of my heart.* ’ ”

“ Secret of my heart,” repeats Partridge, in the most business-like manner, while he writes at the lady’s dictation.

*"Though your modesty and self-depreciation will not suffer you to,"* continues the lady.

"Do you think, Lady Dove, that he is really much troubled with modesty?" asks the amanuensis.

"Pray indulge me," says the lady, a little impatiently.

"I beg your pardon," replies Mr. Partridge, "I have written the sentence which excited my criticism."



*"Everything should show you that it is you only that I love."*

"Very well," says Partridge, writing; "go on, my lady."

*"You that I love—have you got that?"*

"Yes."

*"And you understand me?"*

"Yes—'You that I love,'—that is plain enough."

"I would make it plain, sir," says Lady Dove, meekly. "*And though I am already bound in gratitude to you—*"

"In gratitude to Lord Hawk!" says Mr. Partridge.

"Pray write, sir."

"Well," says Mr. Partridge, "as you desire. *In gratitude to you—I have written it.*"

"*Yet my passion is most disinterested.*"

"Yes—I proceed at your dictation, but against my own judgment and understanding," says Partridge.

The lady does not reply, but proceeds with her dictation: "*And to convince you that you owe much care to my Affections—*"

"Yes," says the amanuensis, giving himself up to the riddle, and no longer trying to go with the lady.

"*I would wish that I had not experienced—*"

"Well, my lady, go on."

"*Had not experienced your tender care of me in my infancy.*"

"Eh? What? Did I hear aright?" exclaims the amanuensis; "am I dreaming?"

"I have exposed my secret," says the lady to herself (it would be an "aside" on the stage), "what will he say? He will hate me!"

"Harriet!" says Mr. Partridge, noticing her confusion.

"Sir," she replies, meekly, her eyes bent on the ground.

"To whom do you write this letter?"

"To—to—to Lord Hawk, is it not?" she answers.

"Then you must not talk about his care of your infancy; it would be absurd."

"Yes, it would indeed," the lady says, in reply; "it is improper, quite."

"Did it escape you in your confusion, my dear?"

"It did, indeed."

"What shall I say in its place?"

"I do not know—I said quite enough at the outset to make myself understood."

"Then we will say no more—is that your wish?"

"It is useless, I fear, to say more."

"Finish it in the usual way, with compliments, et cetera, and send it away."

"Yes—send it away—if you think I may do—if you think I ought to—if you think it necessary."

"That is as you think," he says, folding and sealing the letter. A servant knocks at the door and enters; addressing him, Mr. Partridge says, "Carry this letter to——"

Lady Dove interrupts Mr. Partridge, with something like anger and impatience.

"To whom?" she asks, looking straight at him, her lip curling with a slight expression of disdain and annoyance.

"To Lord Hawk," says Partridge, and hands the letter to the servant, who disappears with it in well-bred servant-like silence.

"What a terrible situation!" says Lady Dove to herself (the usual aside).

"I am amazed!" remarks Mr. Partridge (also aside).

"I cannot speak another word" (very much aside), says the lady.

"My prudence fails me," says Mr. Partridge, almost as loud, as he replaces the pens and ink.

"He disapproves my passion," says the lady (aside again), "and I shall die of confusion and chagrin."

These asides are just becoming troublesome and hard to maintain, when there enters Miss Perkee from a door leading into the drawing-room, at the keyhole of which door she has been picking up scraps of her mistress' confessions. Satisfied that the interview is over, she deems it right to see how the lady looks at the end of it.

"Beg pardon," she says, "Sir Charles Turkeycock is waiting. I was to say that he is anxious to know your ladyship's determination."

"I must retire to conceal my weakness," says Mr. Partridge (aside) to himself, and hurrying from the room without noticing Miss Perkee or even saying another word to his ward.

"This is odd, my lady—what can be the meaning of Mr. Partridge leaving the room in that manner?"

Lady Dove does not take the smallest notice of her maid's question; but retires as unceremoniously as Mr. Partridge had done before her.

"Here's a precious mystery! She does not love that young foppish, effeminate lord, after all! She never actually said she did, but I felt sure it was arranged between them. The sly lady—she loves some one that isn't respectable, and her guardian has not been quite so gentle with her as usual. He has evidently given it to her. Here's a nice thing, and I not to know all about it! I could hardly catch a word they said; but I will know what it all means—I will follow my lady, and tease her to death till she tells me all; and if I don't succeed, I'll give her warning and go and be a female doctor, or a telegraph clerk, or something, that I will."

With which noble resolve Miss Perkee bounces out of the room just as Sir Charles Turkeycock and Mr. Partridge enter it, in time for the next scene.

SCENE II.—A SURPRISE FOR MY LORD HAWK.

(The Library as before.)

"UPON my word, Sir Charles, I am still in the dark," says Mr. Partridge. "It is a riddle, sir, a riddle that I cannot solve."

"What the deuce is it?" exclaims Sir Charles; "'Pon my soul" (gobble-gobble) "I never heard of lovers so difficult to manage. Perhaps you have been too rough with the lady" (gobble-gobble). "I saw her pass up the staircase, and she

seemed to be angry" (gobble)—“ never saw her out of humour in my life before.”

“ I can only so far collect from her behaviour, Sir Charles, that your nephew is not so much in her good graces as he would have you believe.”

“ Begad, that is likely enough! But if it is so, there will be a row” (gobble-gobble). “ Demmit, sir, if he likes to make a fool of himself he shan’t make me ridiculous” (gobble-gobble). “ By Jove, sir, does he make a laughing-stock of me ? ”

Sir Charles raises his stick, decants his port, and does what Lord Hawk calls the military drill business on the hearth-rug; while Mr. Partridge raises his hands in deprecation of the veteran’s wrath.

“ A little vanity is excusable in Lord Hawk.”

“ Vanity ! demmit, sir, I will ” (gobble-gobble).

“ Come in,” says Mr. Partridge, in reply to an earnest knocking at the door.

Miss Perkee enters, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

“ Pray forgive me, gentlemen ; but I feel sure you will ! I have discovered the secret—undone the puzzle—the Davenport ropes have fallen. I know the happy man—I know the brave knight about whom my lady was so distressed and embarrassed.”

“ Well, well, child—out with it,” says Sir Charles.

“ Has she not told you, sir ? ” asked Miss Perkee, turning her fierce eyes upon Mr. Partridge.

“ No, no—that is, not directly,” he says.

“ So much the better!” exclaims Miss Perkee. “ Oh, how delightful it is to discover a secret—and to be the first to let it out ! I vowed I would know it, and at last—at last my lady confessed all ! ”.

“ All what ? confound the woman—beg pardon,” says Sir Charles.

“ Don’t be rude, you naughtv, naughty man,” says Miss Perkee,

leering at Sir Charles, and looking very knowingly at Mr. Partridge.

"Out with it," says Sir Charles again.

"In the first place, my lady does not like your nephew, and never did."

"And I told the ass as much," says Sir Charles, decanting his port and shouldering his stick.

"She hates the young men of the period—thinks them snobs and idiots; she has settled her affections upon one of riper years and riper understanding."

"Indeed," says Sir Charles.

"She expects from a lover in the autumn of his days more constancy, more devotion, and of course more discretion—these are her very words."

"Peculiar words," says Mr. Partridge, fidgeting with his watch-chain.

"But prudent words" (gobble-gobble), says Sir Charles; "prudent and sensible."

"In short," continues Miss Perkee, "as she had openly declared against the nephew, and talked of autumn and prudence, I took upon me to speak of the uncle."

"Of me, child!" exclaims Sir Charles, gobbling for breath.

"Of you, sir," says Miss Perkee, not in the least discomposed.

"And she did not say no, but cast such a look and fetched such a sigh! If ever I looked or sighed in my life, I knew on the instant how it was with her—ladies have curious fancies!"

"Fancies! the devil, Miss Perkee," roars out Sir Charles, his face aglow with a strange delight. "Fancies! Eh, Partridge! You joke, Miss Perkee" (gobble-gobble-gobble), "you joke?"

"Indeed I do not, sir," says the maid, stolidly; "I said nothing could be so ridiculous as such a choice. Nay, Sir Charles, do not frown; I said all sorts of things against you

that I did not mean" [Gobble-gobble, "Ah, hem!" from Sir Charles]. "I said you were old and gouty, and rheumatic and half blind."

"Demmit, you need not have gone so far as that!" exclaims Sir Charles.

"It was no matter what I said; she had made up her mind—"

"But you might have said less, young woman," says Sir Charles, with real turkeycock pomp, strutting to and fro and tossing his comb magnificently.

"Rest assured, Sir Charles," remarks Partridge, "that a true heart and a good understanding will prevail more with Lady Dove than mere fashionable accomplishments."

"Mr. Partridge, sir," says Sir Charles, planting his stick firmly on the carpet, "I have had my day—in my time I have been well received by the ladies" (gobble-gobble). "But I am more in my winter than my autumn—the lady cannot mean me—no, no, there is some mistake" (gobble-gobble).

"I tell you, Sir Charles, there is no mistake," breaks in Miss Perkee, with firmness. "You are the gentleman; she says Fate has decreed it, and what Fate has decreed must come to pass."

"You are sure—no mistake—really?" says Sir Charles.

"None, none—positive," says Miss Perkee. "You are the gentleman of Lady Dove's choice."

"Why then, hurrah!" exclaims Sir Charles, "Hang it, I'll be young again for her sake! Ah! ah! ah!" (gobble-gobble-gobble). "Here's a go for my nephew! So I score one against you, Lord Hawk—ah! ah!—the hawk that wanted the dove is superseded by a finer bird. Oh! oh! oh! Vive l'amour, cigars and cognac! By Jupiter, I could sing and dance."

Sir Charles gobbles and laughs, and spreads his tail and shakes his comb and struts, and in the midst of his demonstra-

tions there enters Lord Hawk to the sound of Offenbachian music. He goes to the window and addresses a small company of musicians, whose heads now appear among the foliage.

"That will do—play softly—bravo! capital!"

"What the deuce is this, sir?" exclaims Sir Charles.

"A little private band of mine," drawls Lord Hawk; "as Lady Dove is a trifle eccentric, and fond of music, I thought I would serenade her in the old style."

"Old style!" says Sir Charles, "there's nothing of the old style about that infernal music."

"It's a wedding march," says Lord Hawk; "it's appropriate, at all events."

At which Sir Charles laughs and coughs and gobbles until he almost threatens to have a downright fit of hilarity.

"Do you hear the puppy?" he says, at length, looking at Miss Perkee and poking Mr. Partridge in the ribs with his stick; "wedding march—listen to the ass!"

"It is time to clear up all mistakes," says Partridge.

"Now for it—ah! ah!" says Sir Charles.

"Lady Dove is not destined to be your wife, Lord Hawk," continues Partridge.

"Sir!" exclaims Lord Hawk.

"The young lady has fixed her affections on another."

"Another!" says his Lordship, taken aback by Mr. Partridge's cool and emphatic manner.

"Yes, sir, another," says Sir Charles; "that is English, I hope; if it is not, damit, my lord nephew, you can translate it into French."

"*Vous êtes bien drôle, mon oncle,*" sneers Lord Hawk.

"Show your teeth" (gobble-gobble). "There's nothing else for you to do—she has fixed her heart upon another, I tell you," says Sir Charles, grandly.

"Very well."

"And that other is one to whom you owe respect, look you" (gobble-gobble).

"I am his respectful, humble servant."

"You are a fine fellow, with your cock-and-bull stories about love and modesty and all that!" (gobble-gobble).

"What are you driving at, uncle? You will make me uneasy, really!"

"About her dying in love for you, when you have no more interest in her than Sergeant Bates or the Two-headed Nightingale" (gobble-gobble)—"ah! ah!—a pretty fellow!"

Lord Hawk goes to the window, and bids the music cease.

"You think that the women are all for you young fellows," says Sir Charles.

"Yes, yes; you are quite right there, uncle; ah! ah!"

"Oh, what a jolly ass you will look by-and-by!" exclaims Sir Charles, with an expression of real pity for his nephew.

"Well, whoever my precious rival may be, here is a 'wonner' for him as they say," replies Lord Hawk, taking a letter from his pocket.

"What the devil is that?"

"A shot from a Woolwich Infant, that's all; it will sink a pirate, at all events."

"What is it, you noodle?"

"A letter from the lady herself, you jolly old turkeycock."

"To you?"

"To me! She reproaches me with my modesty—there can be no mistake about that."

"What is this, Mr. Partridge?" asks Sir Charles.

"A letter dictated by the lady, and written by me."

"Sent by her ladyship to my nephew?"

"I believe so."

"Well but, then" (gobble-gobble), says Sir Charles, "how the devil! Miss Perkee—eh? what becomes of your story now?"

"I don't understand it," says Miss Perkee.

"Nor I! 'Pon my soul, I begin to think——!"

Mr. Partridge looks anxiously from one to the other.

"You will all understand soon," says Lord Hawk.

"What is the meaning of this music?" asks Lady Dove, entering the room at this interesting crisis.

"Your ladyship," replies Lord Hawk, "I brought the band; thought it would please you—especially after the honour you have done me by the confessions in your most kind letter. But be straight, Harriet, with these good people; they tell me I am nobody here, that I am supplanted by another, and all sorts of wild things."

Lord Hawk surveys the group through his glass, drops the disc from his eye, tears frantically at his wristbands, looks at his boots, strikes an attitude of superiority over everybody in the world, and waits.

"It is time I spoke plainly," says the lady, with a timid but firm glance which comprehends the whole of the room; "to hesitate longer would be injurious to all parties."

"Most judicious," remarks Lord Hawk.

"Be quiet, Hawk," says Sir Charles.

"I am silent," responds his lordship.

"You have all been in error," says the lady; "my bashfulness may have deceived you, my heart never did."

"*C'est vrai,*" observes Lord Hawk, to his boots.

"Therefore, before I declare my sentiments, it is proper that I should disavow any engagement; but, at the same time, I must confess——"

"Yes, all, by all means," says Sir Charles.

"Courage, mademoiselle!" remarks Lord Hawk.

"That another, not you, Lord Hawk, has won my heart."

"Another, not you," roars Sir Charles, shaking his stick at his nephew; "not you, my conceited friend."

"Has won my heart," continues Lady Dove, "and without caring for the conquest; I cannot be deceived in his conduct; modesty may tie a lady's tongue, but silence in a man can only proceed from indifference or contempt."

"How charmingly she reproaches my unconsciousness!" says Sir Charles Turkeycock, almost gobbling her up with his eyes, which survey her all over with intense admiration.

"As to that letter, Lord Hawk, your error there is pardonable, and in that matter I confess myself somewhat to blame; but it was really not my fault that it was sent to you; the contents must also have told you that it could not be intended for you."

"Certainly, of course" (gobble-gobble), says Sir Charles; "now it is my turn to speak. Hem! hem! most sweet young lady, whose charms are beyond all description" (gobble-gobble), "how could you do me the injustice to think that my silence proceeded from contempt? Was it natural, was it prudent, for a man of sixty-five to——"

"What!" exclaims Lord Hawk, with spiteful surprise. "By all that's ridiculous—what! is my uncle the happy man?—is Sir Charles Gobble-gobble my rival?—I shall die of laughter!"

"Gobble-gobble! you wretched ass," shouts Sir Charles. "How dare you insult your uncle? By Jove, I'll——"

"Peace! peace!" exclaims the lady, turning towards Sir Charles, with a gentle but sarcastic smile; "do not imagine, sir, that to me your age is any fault."

"You are very kind—you are queen-like in your noble generosity and condescension, my love," says Sir Charles, modulating his voice to a mincing whisper.

"Neither is it a merit, Sir Charles," continues the lady loftily, "of that extraordinary nature that I should sacrifice to it an inclination which I have for another."

"Another, another!" exclaims Sir Charles. "How is this?"

"Another, not you, Sir Charles;" drawls Lord Hawk, fixing

the old gentleman with his glance and pulling up his cuffs at him.

"What can it mean?" remarks Miss Perkee, whose eyes have been sparkling with anticipation and enjoyment all through the dialogue.

"Madam!" says Sir Charles, with something like manly dignity, "I have been foolishly led into a mistake, which I hope you will excuse" (gobble-gobble), "and I have made myself very ridiculous, which I hope I may live to forget. I ought to be kicked for as big a fool as my nephew."

"Pray make no excuses," says the lady, looking at Mr. Partridge.

"What I now see and hear, with the remembrance of all that has gone before, may well induce me to speak," says Mr. Partridge, with sudden animation and joy in his voice and looks.

"Now for it!" says Lord Hawk; "go on, Partridge—it is as good as a play—a deuced sight better than some plays."

"My dear Lady Dove!" exclaims Partridge, without noticing any one else, utterly regardless of the astonished faces of the company. "My dear Harriet! Can you ever forgive my apparent indifference? Can you think that I have seen and talked to you unmoved? It has been an effort of years to keep down the daring ambition of my heart! The most unworthy of your admirers, I have loved you long and secretly; but I can no longer resist the violence of my passion. Behold me at your feet!"

"Hang me if this is not becoming funny," says Lord Hawk; "the moon has changed, and the old boys are growing frisky."

"Pray rise, my dear sir," says the lady, her face beaming with satisfaction. "I have refused my hand to Sir Charles and to this young lord; the one accuses me of caprice, the other of singularity. Should I refuse my hand a third time, I might call down upon my poor little head a more severe reproach.

Therefore, Mr. Partridge, I give you my hand ; you have long since possessed yourself of my heart."

"My dear lady, thus let me seal the joyous bond," says Partridge, taking her manfully by the hand and kissing her.

"Excellent!" says Miss Perkee. "Give me leave, sir, to congratulate you on your success, and my lady on her judgment. Lady Dove has my taste ; ripe fruit for my money ; when it is too green it sets one's teeth on edge ; when it is too mellow, it has no flavour at all."

"You baggage," says Sir Charles, "hold your tongue ! And you, most clever young gentleman of the period, are you satisfied with the fool's part you have given me, and that you have played in this farce of courtship and matrimony ?"

"What would you have me say, Sir Charles ? I am of the period sufficiently cool not to fret because the wind, which was east this morning, is now west. The poor lady, in pique, has sacrificed herself to be revenged on me ; but mark you, sir, Partridge will be demnably silly if he continues to live near my place—a word to the wise !"

"That's malicious, and vain as it is malicious," says Sir Charles, tossing his head disdainfully at his nephew ; "but nothing will cure conceit. Mr. Partridge, and my Lady Dove, I have sense enough—and in his heart, so has Hawk—not to be at all doubtful of your devotion to each other, and your consequent happiness."

"Sir Charles," responds Partridge, drawing Lady Dove's arm in his, and affectionately patting her hand. "I hope that we shall all continue to live as neighbours and friends. For you, my Harriet, words cannot express my wonder or my joy ; the future only can tell you how true and devoted I am to your happiness, how sensible I am of your condescension."

"My own dear love !" says the lady, looking archly at Hawk. And thus ends the drama.

## THE WHITE CAMELLIA.

By H. SAVILE CLARKE.

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### I.

#### THE PHOTOGRAPH.

THERE were no pleasanter rooms in London than those of my friend, Edward Maynard, Esq., artist and Bohemian, or, as his friends called him, "Teddy." There was no occasion to repeat his surname, for London contained but one "Teddy" for us—Teddy Maynard.

When I say Bohemian, I do not mean that Teddy's existence was spent in the haunting of disreputable taverns, and the consumption of alcoholic mixtures, the characteristics of many of the Bohemians of the present day; but that his tastes were of a delicately unconventional kind, and that while no cavalier looked more irreproachable at the "Zoo" on Sundays, he had gone through adventures in France and Spain which served to show he had deserted his vocation in being an artist, and should have "gone in for" knight-errantry.

To return, however, to Teddy's rooms, in which I was sitting on one pleasant afternoon, just when the spring was about to surrender herself to the kiss of summer. They were decorated after a design of his own. Dark maroon-coloured panels, edged with gold, with hangings and furniture to correspond. Over the mantelpiece was a curious old-fashioned glass, set in an oak

frame. Cabinets and bookcases of the same wood stood in various parts of the room, and the walls were adorned with some good pictures in oil and water-colours, the production chiefly of Teddy's artist friends, who had given him those "nice little bits," which delight painters and puzzle the public. It was not far off Regent Street, a quiet row of houses within sight and hearing of that gay thoroughfare; and the distant echoes of voices and footsteps, mingled with the roll of carriages, brought one's thoughts back to London, when the beauty of the afternoon had carried them away into dreamy visions of how the country was looking in the spring-time.

Teddy was out. He was always out when you called, and I was waiting for him, in obedience to a note left for me with his Cerberus. Having to wait, it was natural that I should light a cigar, and then looking about for that mischief which Dr. Watts declares the enemy of mankind will always find for idle hands to do, I seized upon one of the photographic albums which ornamented the table, and commenced an investigation as to whether Teddy had picked up any new *cartes-de-visite*. I may mention that he had a perfect mania for these little pictures, and was always having them presented to him on his first introduction to people, and buying any pretty faces that he took a fancy to in his walks abroad. I saw a good many old favourites in his book. The pretty girl in the riding-habit he had the happiness to call cousin; the young lady with charmingly dishevelled hair, who had distinguished herself so in private theatricals, and a good many more; and then I hastily turned over the leaves to get nearer the end of the book, where any new faces would be found.

And how was I rewarded? How can I put upon paper the impression that a photograph, the last in the album, made upon me? I was at first quite startled. I was only looking at the pictures carelessly, but something in the face of this one made

me start up and go to the window with the book, to get a better light upon it. The photograph was a wonderfully good one. The sun, glad to limn so fair a face, had done his work lovingly and well. It was the most beautiful, the most expressive face that I had ever seen. Dark hair, as far as I could tell, a face classical in its perfection, lit up with eyes that seemed almost to have the power of speech as they looked at you. An exquisite mouth, small and not too full, while the curve of the chin, and the way in which the head was posed on the bosom, "like a bell-flower on its bed," might have inspired Mr. Browning with that simile.

It was not only love at first sight, but love with a photograph. I had not thought my susceptibilities easily roused, but here I was in a fever of love about a small picture on a piece of pasteboard. Who was this girl? That was the question. I hastily took the photograph out of the book, and looked to see who the photographer was. There was no name at the back of it! Plain cardboard, that was all. The usual photographer's imprint, and number of the negative absent. Where had Teddy got it? Was it a *carte* of one of his friends? or had he picked it up somewhere? Was she married? or engaged? in short, who and what was this mysterious girl, who had changed me from a sober and rational being into a strangely frantic and excited creature?

When would Teddy come in? I paced the room impatiently, holding the photograph before me. I opened the window, and looked up and down the street many times, and at last, after what seemed hours, I heard his footsteps on the stairs, and he lounged into the room.

"Well, old man, how are you?" he said; "glad you got my note and waited."

"Teddy," I said, without returning his greeting, and showing him the photograph. "Tell me whose likeness this is?"

"Oh!" said Teddy, prolonging that exclamation in the most aggravating way possible, and coolly lighting a pipe. "How excited we are about it!"

"I know I am excited," I said, for I had worked myself up into a perfectly ridiculous condition. "But do answer my question. Who is this girl? I must know."

"Let me see," said he, pretending not to recognize it. "Oh, yes, that—that—a photograph of my aunt, the Empress of China. Nice old girl, isn't she?"

"Teddy," I said, impatiently, "please be serious. I'm awfully spoony upon this picture. Pray tell me where you got it, and all about it."

"I tell you my aunt—" he began, and then seeing how annoyed I looked, he said, "Well, my dear boy, the fact is, I don't know who it is any more than you do. I thought it was a tidy face, and bought it of some photographic chap in the suburbs somewhere, for a shilling."

I was bitterly disappointed, and sat down in a disconsolate way, still keeping hold of the photograph. I had almost rather he had told me the unknown beauty was married, or out of my reach in some other way; it was the suspense, the absence of any knowledge whatever about her that was so hard to bear.

"Why, Frank, old boy," said Teddy, "you look all knocked of a heap. You don't mean to say that you are really spoons on that *carte*. Why, she may be the mother of any number of promising children. She may be a blessed barmaid. She—"

"Teddy, please don't. I'm hard hit. I know I'm an ass, but I can't help it. I will find out about this girl, if possible. Can't you remember where you bought the photograph?"

"No, upon my honour I can't. Somewhere near Westbourne Grove, I fancy. I was dining in Bayswater, I know, but I can't be sure."

"I may have it, I suppose?"

"Certainly. But if you'll take my advice, Frank, you'll put it into the fire."

"Thank you. I shan't do that." And I placed the *carte* carefully in my pocket-book. "Now, good-bye. Look you up again to-morrow."

"All right. But where are you off to in such a hurry?"

"Well," I said slowly, "I think I shall take a walk in the neighbourhood of Westbourne Grove."

"You old ass!" was the complimentary rejoinder, and then I went away.

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## II.

### WESTBOURNE GROVE.

WESTBOURNE Grove, as most Londoners know, is not to be understood in a sylvan or rural sense, for but few trees grace the pleasant Bayswater thoroughfare which goes by that name. It is a sort of miniature Regent Street, with many excellent shops, while the famous Whiteley provides you with everything from the cradle to the grave, and it is the favourite lounge of the female part of the Bayswater population. Bayswater, as everybody knows, is given up almost entirely to stockbrokers, retired Indian officers, and Jews: it is a sort of metropolitan Asia Minor; and about four o'clock on a fine afternoon all that is fairest of the female, and most Israelitish of the male sex, promenades Westbourne Grove.

Native Indian nurses may be seen in charge of perambulators full of innumerable children; invalids are dragged about in bath-chairs by the most malevolent-looking ruffians in existence; maiden ladies stalk on with an evangelical and tract-distributing

air ; the British curate may be seen ambling along as if conscious of the nimbus with which the imagination of his female votaries invest him ; the Bayswater swell, a distinct type, very weak about the legs, hangs on to his eyeglass, and nods to a passing acquaintance ; a ladies' school—some ten hapless maidens—is marched sternly past the attraction of shop windows full of bonnets and earrings ; the pavement is hidden by waving dresses, and the air is redolent of scent. Such is Westbourne Grove ; and for this promenade I started when I left Teddy Maynard's rooms, with the precious photograph in my possession.

When I got into Regent Street I hailed a hansom, and was soon speeding westwards towards the Grove. As soon as I was safely ensconced in the vehicle I took out the portrait. It looked lovelier than before, the face still fairer than when I had first seen it ; and by the time I had got to the Marble Arch I was more in love with it than ever. It was madness, I knew, but men had been mad before my time for love of a woman's face ; and wiser men than I was, had engaged in the mad tournament in olden times to win a smile from a lady that they could never dare to love. I had imported the old-world madness of chivalry into the nineteenth century ; and it was nobody's business but my own if I chose to go on what every one of my friends would call a wild-goose chase after a *carte-de-visite*.

In the mean time I was speeding towards Westbourne Grove, wrapt in the contemplation of my beloved photograph, and with no very definite idea of what course I was going to pursue when I reached my destination.

Teddy had given me no clue whatever to the photographer ; there would be a dozen in the Grove, and I was not even sure that his purchase had not been made in some street in the vicinity ; so that to take the picture round to every photographer in the neighbourhood seemed likely to be a very hopeless

business, which would lead to no satisfactory result. It was probable, I thought, that the portrait had been privately taken, and that possibly a few copies had remained in the photographer's hands. There was some chance, then, that finding the picture had sold, he might, if he possessed another, have exposed it also for sale. I accordingly dismissed my cab at the end of the Queen's Road, and commenced an investigation of the photographers in the Grove.

It was weary work, for, as I might have expected, I could find no counterpart of my portrait. I even went into several places and made inquiries as to whether it had been taken there; but my question was met with a supercilious negative, one magnificently-attired *artist* informing me that their work was "infinitely superior to anythink like that." It seemed like sacrilege to be thus exposing my picture to vulgar gaze, and I determined to abandon the search, at all events for some days. I thought that in the meanwhile I would try and extract from Teddy more exactly the whereabouts of the place at which he had bought it. I would make him come with me to Bayswater, and go over the ground which he had traversed on the day when he discovered the photograph. If that plan failed, I should have no alternative but to try every photographer in the district; and I determined that even if the search lasted for months, I would persevere with it, and not rest until I had at least discovered who the original of my cherished portrait was, where she lived, and what was her position in life. It was a mad resolve, but I am a man of a very obstinate nature, and I determined to accomplish my end.

On application to Teddy next day he received me with a great deal of unfeeling chaff; and I found that it was quite hopeless to attempt to get any more precise directions from him. He had gone in a cab to Bayswater, he said, and had stopped to get some cigars. He had seen the photograph near the tobac-

conist's, had bought it, and then driven on, and had "not the vaguest notion"—so he said—as to what street it was in. Somewhere near Westbourne Grove, that was all he could tell me; and he concluded his information, as he had done our previous conversation on the subject, with the gratuitous statement that I was a great donkey to go running after a photograph. Thus far Teddy: of no use at all to me.

And in truth, after many inquiries in various quarters, I began in some measure to doubt the wisdom of my proceedings myself. Not a very surprising thing, perhaps, when my situation was calmly reviewed. Here I was, rushing all over town after photographers, only to meet with perpetual disappointment; and even if I was so far successful as to find out who my portrait was, I might be as far off knowing her and winning her as ever. I looked at the fair face, and the wonderful eyes that met mine so steadily in the picture, and I was driven nearly mad by the thought that they might even then be smiling upon some one else; that some one with a good right to such happiness was even then caressing that sweet face. She might be another man's wife, and all I could do when I found her out would be to accept my fate, and leave the place where she lived, to hide my hopeless love, as the old song says, "for ever and a day!"

At last, after visiting scores of photographers, I began to think my search hopeless, and to despair of ever finding my visionary lady love. I did not swerve, however, in my allegiance to her charms. I still held my *carte-de-visite* to be the portrait of the fairest, sweetest woman upon earth. I would continue to hold that belief, no matter whether I ever found her or not. The said portrait in time, after much affectionate saluting of an osculatory nature, began to get somewhat faded, and to lose some of its original brilliancy. I determined, therefore, to have it copied by a first-rate artist, and I thought that

at the same time I would have it enlarged. I was doubtful about having it coloured, for I hardly knew the exact tints to order. So I took the *carte* to one of the greatest photographers in town—a man, by the way, to whom I had before applied to see if he knew anything of it—and I gave orders for an enlarged copy to be made of it in the very best possible style.

The attendant to whom I gave the order, after looking at the portrait for a few minutes, said, “An enlarged copy of this, sir? You can have it directly. Didn’t you order one the other day, sir?”

“No!” I said, in the utmost astonishment. “But I order it now.”

“Well, sir, I think we have one on hand. Will you walk this way?”

In another instant I had followed him into an adjoining room, and there, on an easel, stood a large portrait of my darling!

Enlarged evidently from a copy of the same *carte* as I possessed, but it was coloured; and now that I could see the exact shade of the hair and complexion, it looked more beautiful than ever.

“I have been looking for this everywhere,” I said, eagerly, to the attendant. “Pray tell me who it is?”

“Who it is?” the man repeated, looking at me suspiciously. “Why, it’s an enlarged copy of the portrait you have in your hand, to be sure.”

He thought of course that I must know the original; and I saw the necessity of being cautious, or he might refuse to give me the information I wanted.

“Ah, yes,” I said; “but I was to order the enlargement for a friend of the lady’s, and I was not told the name. Can’t you tell me?”

The man still seemed suspicious, but took up an order book, and said—

"Well, sir, I'd better take your order, and we shall see the name here, I dare say."

I gave my order for an enlargement like the one before me, and begged the man not to mention it to the persons who had ordered the first one, as it was intended as a surprise to some relatives. I enforced my request by a liberal douceur, and the man, who seemed quite mollified, turned over to some previous entries, and said, showing me the book—

"There you are, sir. Miss Vane, 28, Worcester Square, Hyde Park, W."

My heart beat, and I felt my face flushing, as I read the address. I had found her at last—and she was still Miss Vane—unless, indeed, "Miss Vane" was only some relation.

"I suppose this is the lady herself," I said, carelessly.

"Yes, sir, I think so," the man said, "for I waited on her."

"Thanks," I returned, and after mentally noting the address, I rushed off to Maynard's rooms.

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### III.

#### IN THE PARK.

TEDDY was seated in his easiest arm-chair, tranquilly engaged in the consumption of sherry and seltzer, and smoking an enormously long wooden pipe. He looked up as I entered, and said, "Ah! the photographic maniac, and how are we and the picture to-day?"

"To-day," I said, in a tone of triumph, "we have found out the address."

"Indeed," he said, calmly; "then sit down and have a pipe;

there's plenty of seltzer in that cupboard, so mix and be happy."

"Insensate creature! you don't even ask who she is!"

"Not I. I have heard so much about her for the last month or so, that you'll excuse me for saying it, but I think I would rather not know her address. If you want to rave about her as usual, I'll shut my eyes and listen. Don't go on longer than you can help."

"Wretch!" I said, laughing, "she is a Miss Vane—lives in Worcester Square, Hyde Park."

"Is she? Old maid, I suppose."

"Well, if you think her photograph is that of an old maid you are welcome to your opinion. All I can say is that I don't agree with you."

"And what are you going to do now? You don't know any Vanes, and I don't know any Vanes. I don't see how you're any nearer to your object, which is, I presume, an introduction. Be satisfied with the address. Give it up,—and hand me the tobacco-jar."

"I shall do neither. I *must* know Miss Vane; and you are so insufferably lazy, that it will do you all the good in the world to get the baccy for yourself."

"How do you propose to begin this charming plan?"

"By going off immediately to reconnoitre the house. I may catch a glimpse of her."

"Poor fellow!" said Teddy, mockingly, touching his forehead significantly. "How far gone we are to be sure!"

Teddy Maynard was never known to be in love with anybody himself, and he was quite incapable of comprehending it in other people. Regardless of his chaff, I set off to Worcester Square to have a look at number twenty-eight.

I found as I expected, a fine decorous-looking mansion, with nothing to distinguish it from the other houses in the square.

I did not imagine, of course, that there would be anything distinctive about it ; but it seemed to me, in my excited frame of mind, that the careless way in which people passed it was highly reprehensible. They did not know what a pearl of price that dull casket contained. There was nothing to be gained, however, by watching the house just when the inhabitants would be going to dinner, and Miss Vane was hardly likely to appear at one of the windows for my benefit, like a princess in a story book ; so I left the square and betook myself to a solitary dinner at the club, where I held a council of war with myself.

The result of that council was that I determined my first move must be to see the lady, to make sure that she was Miss Vane, the original of my photograph, and whether she was likely to stay in town during the whole of the season. In accordance with this resolve I went down to Worcester Square the next day, and had an interview with the affable policeman on duty in the neighbourhood. He knew Worcester Square, he said, well—had been in service near it before he entered the force. Yes. A Mr. Vane, Colonel Vane, lived at number twenty-eight. Any family ? Yes—Miss Vane, as handsome a young lady as ever stepped. Did they drive or walk out much ? Generally drove—about two or three in the afternoon. Was always glad to answer a gent's questions, when he *was* a gent : and as he spoke my informant's hand closed affectionately over the half-sovereign which I slipped into it.

This was so far satisfactory. I did not go back to incredulous Teddy to pass the morning, but strolled tranquilly into the Park, and there consumed innumerable cigars, thinking over my good fortune in having a chance of seeing Miss Vane. I began to wonder, in a foolish and fantastic way, whether she would notice me. It was exceedingly improbable that she should do so, but I had been thinking of her so continuously for so many months that I almost believed my mind could, as some people

say, have influenced hers. Our thoughts should have been *en rapport*, some knowledge of my strange and earnest love might, I fancied, have made itself felt in her heart. If the mind, concentrated on one object, has power and volition beyond the body, as has been asserted—and cases bearing out the statement are not uncommon—I know that I must have exercised some mysterious influence over her thought and feeling, although she would never know from whence it sprang.

Such were some of my thoughts as I paced up and down the broad walks of the Park, longing for the hour to come when I might have a chance of again seeing my divinity. I was just leaving when I saw an open carriage coming towards the gates at a quick pace. I stepped aside to let it pass—and the face that had haunted me sleeping and waking for so many months flashed across me again. Our eyes met for a minute, and then the carriage bore her out of sight, and left me standing near the gates with my face flushed and my heart beating as if I had been undergoing some violent exercise.

Colonel Vane and his daughter had come for their drive earlier than usual, or I might have seen her get into the carriage. Now, however, they would probably be in the drive, and I could go and watch them pass and repass. I accordingly went and stationed myself at a convenient part of the railings, and waited for the carriage. At last, far down the line I could see it approach. My darling had on the airiest, sweetest little summer bonnet in the world, and her beautiful brown hair shone underneath it, as it formed a coronal for the fair face and lustrous eyes that held me in thrall.

Her father, a handsome, soldierly-looking old man with a grey moustache, sat beside her, and she seemed to be listening attentively to some story he was telling her, for she looked straight in front of her, and I never caught her eye again during the whole time that I watched her in the drive.

And yet it was happiness enough just to be within a few yards of her, to be able to see her at all, and until they drove away from the Park my bliss was complete. Then I went away also, feeling very disconsolate my vision had vanished. When was I to see it again, and how was I to get any nearer to an intimacy with her? Anyone might look at her in the Park. How was I to gain a dearer privilege?

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## IV.

## AT THE OPERA.

I DETERMINED to go to Maynard again, and, luckily, on my way home I met him at a literary and artistic club of which we were both members.

He was smoking as usual, and his first remark was, "Well, old man, how goes it?"

"I've just come from seeing her——"

"Oh! it's her again, is it? I thought you'd quite forgotten that affair," he said, laughing.

"Then you're doomed to disappointment, my boy. I've just come from seeing her out driving in the Park—have seen her several times, and it was glorious!"

"Ah! it was glorious, was it? And what are you going to do next?"

"That's just what I want to know—I don't know what to do next. Can you advise me?"

"Throw yourself before the wheels of her chariot, and when the hoofs of her haughty steeds are trampling out your heart's best blood, tell her how you love her." And Teddy, as he spoke,

waved his cigar dramatically, and then leaned back in his arm-chair as if the effort had been too much for him.

"Don't chaff me, please, but tell me what I'm to do."

Teddy, who is a capital fellow at heart, looked serious for a moment, and then said—

"I have it. Write to her."

"Write to her?"

"Yes."

"But I don't know her, and she'll never forgive such a piece of impertinence."

"Never mind. Risk it. 'He either fears his fate too much——' you know the rest—that's my advice. If you won't take it, why the deuce did you ask me for it?"

"I think I will," I said, musingly.

"That's right," said Teddy, encouragingly. "Write and say who you are: I wouldn't give your real name, but let her know you're a gentleman, and that if she takes you she'll stand a chance of being Lady Harcourt some day. Say you don't want to press matters till you can get a formal introduction to her, and,"—here he stopped a moment—"ask her, if she's not very angry with you, to be at the Opera on some night in one week, when you'll go every night it's open, and wear a white camellia in your button-hole. There's your plan all cut and dried, and you're the most ungrateful fellow in the world if you don't carry it out."

I was rather staggered at the boldness of this proposal, and went home, after having thanked Teddy, promising to think it over. It was indeed a mad scheme, not wilder though than my wild search, after I had seen her photograph. And remember, I was madly in love with Miss Vane; so madly, indeed, that I could not be content to wait until, by some happy accident, I met her in society and got introduced to her. She might be engaged to some one else in the interval, if even she were not

engaged already ; she might even get married ; and I was resolved at least to let her know how strange and mad a passion she had inspired. A girl with such eyes, I thought, must be romantic, and surely all the romance of her nature would come to my aid when she knew for how long I had worshipped her photograph.

For two more days I watched her in the Park, and then I determined to act upon Teddy's advice. Not without some misgivings, however, as to the romantic nature of the proposal having any weight with her ; for on one occasion she was riding, and was attended not only by her father but by a younger cavalier with whom she seemed to be on very intimate terms, and I fancied that she was chaffing him unmercifully about something.

Our family were famous in old days for acting without hesitation, when once a course of action was decided upon, and I was no exception to the general rule. A letter, precisely in accordance with the sagacious Teddy's instructions, was written and despatched the next day. I did not give my own name, fearing Miss Vane's indignation. Being anonymous, the letter could do no harm if it fell into the hands of any one who knew me. Of course she would see me if she went to the Opera; but I thought that, if she kept the appointment, she would hardly be so base as to betray me. There were four opera nights at Covent Garden during the next week, and on one of these four occasions I implored her to appear. I should be there with the white camellia, and I should—so I said in the letter—construe her attendance as a sign that she was not fatally angry with me, and that I might seek an introduction to her in some more conventional and legitimate manner.

It was with a beating heart that I took my seat in a stall at the Opera on the first of the appointed nights. I was absurdly early, in my eagerness to be upon the scene, and few persons

but myself were in the theatre. These I scanned carefully through my opera-glass, and as the stalls and boxes began to fill I devoted the whole of my time to a steady scrutiny of their occupants. People near me in the stalls must have wondered what made me so regardless of the music, and so much on the alert when any new comer appeared in the house. I was voted a great barbarian, no doubt, with no soul for music, and my neighbours must have speculated what had brought me to the Opera, since I had evidently not come there to listen to the singing.

But my search was hopeless. I looked in vain round the "glittering horse-shoe," that spread before me like a rainbow.

I saw many fair faces, many bright eyes bent earnestly upon the stage; golden-haired and dark-haired beauties sat in snug boxes, enthroned like queens, while attentive gentlemen, in irreproachable evening-dress, bent over them. But nowhere in the great theatre could I see the one face that was engraven on my heart: on the first night, at all events, she had not thought fit to come; and as my mind dwelt on my disappointment, I was very angry with myself for ever having taken Teddy's advice, and having written my mad letter. I went home in a very disconsolate mood, although I was rather consoled by the enlarged photograph which had been taken for me, and which was installed in a place of honour in my rooms.

The next day I had no heart even to go to the Park; and again punctual to the time of opening, I went to the Opera. Again I was disappointed. Miss Vane was evidently incensed at my impertinence in writing to her, and never made her appearance.

I returned home the second night mad with love and disappointment. I went into Maynard's rooms and upbraided him for his advice, and altogether, as he said, I qualified myself for Colney Hatch by easy stages. I tried to console myself with my portrait; and I saw Miss Vane for an instant in the Park on

the third day, but she only drove round once ; and I took my seat at the Opera, so prepared for a third disappointment that when she never appeared I settled down into calm despair. There was one more night, however—one more chance for me and my white camellia ; and I still dared to hope that I should see her.

On this fourth evening I was obliged to go out to dinner. My host was an old friend of our family, who had been for many years in Canada, and had now come home to settle in his native country. He had no family ; had taken a handsome house in town, and was very desirous of showing every possible kindness to me. I was obliged, therefore, to accept his invitation, but hoped that the Laurences would let me get away in time to go to the Opera.

I was pleasantly surprised, therefore, when on reaching their home and going up into the drawing-room, Mrs. Laurence said to me, "My husband will have to make his apologies to you, Mr. Harcourt, for he is obliged to go off on some most important business immediately after dinner. Now, as I cannot expect to be able to amuse you all the evening, I have got a box at the Opera, Covent Garden : will you take me ?"

"I shall be delighted : but I hope you don't think I should not be equally pleased to be here."

"Well, the fact is," she said, "I am not wholly unselfish. I very seldom get to the Opera, as my husband does not care for music, and am glad when I can catch any one who will go with me. We shall not be alone, by-the-by, as I have a young lady coming to the box who will only need an escort to her carriage, for she is a very independent person, and goes about a good deal by herself."

"Indeed," I said.

"Yes ; she is a charming girl, however, and I hope you will like her."

Then Mr. Laurence came in, and shortly afterwards dinner was announced.

Such an arrangement was an extremely fortunate one for me, I thought, and I only hoped that Mrs. Laurence and her charming young lady might devote themselves entirely to the music, and leave me at liberty to scrutinize the house.

One thing I had to remember, and that was my camellia. I had left the one I intended to wear at my chambers. However, I persuaded good-natured Mrs. Laurence to drive round by my rooms, under pretence of getting my own opera-glass, which I said was specially adapted to my sight. Then I got my flower, put it carefully into my buttonhole, and covered it over with my light overcoat.

When we drew up under the portico at Covent Garden, and were entering the lobby, Mrs. Laurence said to me—

“Why, I declare, there are the Colonel and Edith going up yonder before us. I suppose he’s just brought her, for I know he had to go to the same meeting as Mr. Laurence.”

“The Colonel and Edith!”—“The Colonel!” gave me a thrill, thinking of *her* father, and I wondered with a vague curiosity who they were.

We were getting near our box, led by an obsequious attendant, when I said to Mrs. Laurence—

“You talked of the Colonel just now: may I ask who he is?”

“Colonel Vane; an old friend of my husband’s. He was quartered at Quebec a long time. Edith is his only child, and they live in Worcester Square.”

I sometimes wonder now that I didn’t faint at this intelligence. I am sure unsuspecting Mrs. Laurence must have felt the arm on which she was leaning tremble, and I fancied even the boxkeeper must have been able to hear my heart beating.

Edith Vane! This, then, was the name of my idol; and I thought never did name sound so musical. In a few seconds I should be in her company. I remembered my letter and the camellia. Had she come, I wondered, on this last night? But just as we reached the box-floor, I tore the flower from my button-hole, and put it into the ticket pocket of my coat. I was about to be properly introduced to her, and I thought I would disassociate myself from my foolish letter.

We got to the box; the usual introductions followed; and then Colonel Vane departed, and left me with the ladies. They had a great deal to say to each other, and for some time I occupied myself with sitting in the back of the box, just content to look at Edith. If I had thought her beautiful in her photograph, and when out driving, think how I worshipped her loveliness when I saw her in full dress. I was glad that I had some time given to me to recover myself, and to collect my thoughts, for I was so stunned by this unexpected good fortune that I should have acquitted myself badly had I been required to make myself agreeable as soon as we were seated in the theatre. I was glad Edith had so much to say to Mrs. Laurence, and I was amusing myself by comparing her real face, as I saw it before me, with my photograph, when Mrs. Laurence turned to me and said, laughingly—

“Mr. Harcourt, you have perhaps sharper eyes than Edith or myself. Can you see any gentleman in the theatre with a white camellia in his buttonhole?”

A pleasant occupation for me, truly! How thankful I was I had taken the odious flower out.

“Yes,” said Miss Vane, merrily, “do you see any swain in the stalls who looks particularly love-stricken?”

“May I ask the reason of this investigation?” I said, as lightly as I could, although I felt very nervous. “Is this an appointment?”

Miss Vane glanced quickly at me for a moment as if some suspicion had entered her head, and then said, smiling,—

“Well, I suppose it is. The fact is, Mr. Harcourt, I have an unknown admirer, who implored me to be at the Opera on one night out of four. I did not intend to come, but papa wished me to do so to-night : so, if the enterprising individual is in the house, he will be gratified.”

“The faithless creature is not here, apparently,” I said, scrutinizing the house through my opera-glass : “at least, I don’t see any white camellia, if that was the sign.”

“I’m afraid he’s not,” said Miss Vane. “How very ungallant of him, is it not, Mr. Harcourt ?”

“Poor young man !” said good-natured Mrs. Laurence, who was of rather a sentimental character. “He may have seen you, and be really in love with you, Edith ; and you said you thought, from his letter, that he was a gentleman.”

“Well, he has not kept tryst,” I said, leaning forward to get a good view of the house, and wondering whether any wretch would be present with a conspicuous white camellia, who would be singled out as the hero of the romance.

When I next turned to speak to Miss Vane, I noticed a new and curious expression on her face, as if something was occupying her thoughts that she was trying to conceal: something amusing, apparently, for her eyes were laughing, although her face looked quiet and demure. She answered some question I put to her about the music, and then said—

“Do you often go to the Opera, Mr. Harcourt ?”

“Oh, yes,” I said, carelessly. “I’ve been three times before this week.” And then, remembering my letter, I turned away to hide my confusion.

The hours went swiftly by; far too fast, I thought, for I was in the seventh heaven of delight, and Mrs. Laurence seemed very pleased that Miss Vane and I got on so well together. I

heard little of the opera that evening. "Diva" Patti was ~~en~~ trancing all hearts upon the stage, but my Diva was beside ~~me~~ in the box, and I had no ears for the music.

But the happy evening ended at last. We escorted Edith to her carriage, and then I drove home with Mrs. Laurence, both of us singing a chorus in her praise. One thing deserves to be noted about that evening at the Opera. When I got home, strange to say, I could not find my camellia anywhere, and imagined that it must have been jerked out of my pocket. However, I had, luckily, not needed it, and I went to bed happy, and dreamed of Edith Vane.

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## V.

## THE EPILOGUE.

MRS. LAURENCE, who, like all middle-aged ladies, was very fond of matchmaking, had evidently made up her mind to foster my love affair as much as possible; for I was continually being invited to her house, and always met Edith Vane. I came to know the Colonel also, and in time was invited to Worcester Square, where Edith played the hostess like a little queen. Need I say that I came daily to love her more and more? And I had the happiness of believing that she was not indifferent to my devotion. Riding by her side in the Park, I used sometimes to look back upon the old days when I worshipped her at a distance, and hardly dared to hope that I should ever be so blessed as to be daily in her society.

One afternoon I had gone to Worcester Square, and as Edith was too tired with a ball the previous night to go out riding, I





AN EXPLANATION.

stayed chatting with her in the pleasant drawing-room. And that summer afternoon I put my fate to the touch ; and a strange answer I received to my pleading, when I told Edith Vane how I loved her, and asked her to be my wife.

She did not reply at once, but at last she said—

“Please do not think unkindly of me, but I have a confession to make.”

“I cannot think unkindly of you, Miss Vane—Edith ! You know it would be impossible.”

“Do you remember,” she said, “that night at the Opera, when a gentleman was to meet me with a white camellia in his buttonhole ?”

“Perfectly. How can I ever forget it ?—it was the first time I met you !”

“Well,” she said slowly, “although perhaps you did not see him, I saw the gentleman with the camellia that night.”

“Did you ?” I said, feeling terribly annoyed. Some fellow had been there with the flower ; camellias were common enough. How was it I hadn’t seen him ?

“Yes,” she went on, “and I have seen him since—very often !” And as she spoke she hung her head down, as if to hide her blushes.

How I cursed Teddy and his hateful advice ! Some one had heard of the letter, and had taken advantage of my plan to steal my darling’s heart.

“And—and—” I said trembling, “I know I have no right to ask—you love him ?”

A burning flush came over her face and neck as she looked into my eyes, and said—

“I do !”

I clasped my hands over my face, and groaned. Here was a pleasant end to all my plotting ! And yet she had given me many reasons for believing that she had some love for me. It was

very bitter to hear her openly confess her love for another man, and to know moreover that it had been brought about by my agency.

I was startled by a laugh. Edith Vane was sitting near me—positively laughing at my misery.

"I hardly thought I should have been insulted," I said, indignantly.

But still Edith did nothing but laugh.

"How have I insulted you?" she said.

"How have you insulted me? Why, by laughing at my disappointment when you have confessed your love for another man!"

"But I have not done that!"

"I cannot stop to guess riddles, Miss Vane," I said, abruptly.  
"What do you mean?"

"Why I mean that I love"—and here she half turned her head away—"the gentleman who had a camellia that night at the Opera, and he says that I insult him by saying so. Oh, Frank!"

And then, looking divinely beautiful, she held out to me—my white camellia! And in another moment she was hiding her rosy face on my shoulder.

So I won my darling. The original of the cherished photograph was mine. The appointment with the wearer of the white camellia was kept for life.



BELLA GRANT.

## HOW ONE GHOST WAS LAID.

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### I.

I DID not particularly want to be married. I had managed to live, more or less comfortably, for thirty years without ever once being married. I had not given any distinct consideration to the question of marriage, and I have always held the conviction that it is a matter demanding a great deal of consideration. I have read this in books, good and bad (especially the latter), many of which were in the French tongue. At all events, when I went off to Marrowgate for some weeks of my long vacation, I had no more idea that I should return to

Tanfield Court, Temple, E.C., an engaged man, than that I should return the owner of Fountains Abbey, of which sacred but ruined edifice I should be exceedingly sorry to deprive a nobleman who keeps a noble place in such noble order, and whose menials bring such clean knives and plates for your *pic-nic* with his affable peacocks. I went to Marrowgate to rest myself after a good deal of hard work, and harder pleasure, and not with the slightest intention of changing the position in life in which it had pleased my guardians to place me, that of the occupant of chambers in the court I have mentioned. But you cannot do just what you like in Yorkshire, or in any other English county with which I am at present acquainted.

I find that though a great number of persons go to Marrowgate, the most part do not volunteer the information that they have been there, and are rather inclined to pass over the narrative of their sojourn on the moor. Or else they praise the place as it deserves to be praised, but take great pains to impress upon you that they went only to please somebody else. The wife's husband wanted bracing up, or the husband's wife was disinclined to the racket of a fashionable watering place, or a German tour; the one sister you speak to went because Julia and Ellen had been advised to take the waters, and the brother was merely in attendance on dear old *mater* and the girls.

But, as I have said, that I find a great many persons know Marrowgate as well as they know Hastings or Scarborough, I propose to save myself the exceeding trouble of describing the locality. Local description is a drudgery which should be performed for a writer who has something else to write about besides rocks and trees. I believe that I should myself, had I been an author and not a lawyer, have composed some very beautiful novels, but for my fear of the introductory chapters. I never saw the use of them, for my own part. When you want to know what Lord Charles said to Mrs. Asbestos, and what

arguments he used to make her run away with him, what do you care whether they stood on a mountain road commanding a view of eleven counties and seventy-four churches, or whether the objectionable nobleman pleaded beside a lake round which flourished the *fauna* of the southern shires? Did he or she notice the churches and the foliage? The good old novelists, who had plots and characters, we are told, cut all this sort of thing very short indeed. I, also, shall cut it very short.

Marrowgate is two hundred miles north of London, and it is a moor, with a few houses on the upper part, and a great many—in fact, a handsome little town—on the lower. Its chief product is the most beautiful air in England, not negatively, but absolutely fresh. There are also sulphur and other wells of the utmost virtue and nastiness. People who like coarse reading may look up the account of Marrowgate, which is not spelt so, nor yet the right way, in "Humphrey Clinker," but I do not advise that study. If you want to go to Marrowgate, you may take a mid-day train. This gives you time for a comfortable breakfast before you go, but then you arrive too late for dinner—that is the *table-d'hôte* dinner. You will perhaps notice, towards the end of the journey, that none of the stations have name-boards, and you may think that the inhabitants of the district are ashamed of something, but I believe this is not the case, and that they are not much worse than other persons.

You can choose your hotel in accordance with your idea of comfort. Mine turned out to be very comfortable, for I did not select one of the new houses where folks enjoy themselves in London fashion, with much music and dancing, and sit up late into the night. I went to the oldest and the quietest and the most aristocratic—well, everybody called it so. I do not know how we were more aristocratic than our neighbours, as I never visited the latter. But we were ladies and gentlemen, some of us with inherited titles, and some with titles won with swords,

or paint-brushes, or politics, and we made a very pleasant society.

The hotel was excellently managed, as is every place, from a country to a shop, that is under feminine direction, and, though there were a great many of us, one felt, and it was pleasant to feel, that one was an entity for one's kind-hearted hostesses, and not a mere No. 87 to be debited with brandies and seltzers. We were good, too, for we dined at five o'clock on Sundays, to let the servants go to worship, as I trust they did, for I heard a high character of the episcopalian and sectarian clerical men in those parts. Also we made many excursions, for there are many delightful places within reach of Marrowgate, one of which is Fountains Abbey, already mentioned. We went in large parties, had carriages and waggonettes, and ample store of refreshment; and such expeditions, the expense being divided, cost each of us very little—in money.

In money, very little, I repeat, *avec intention*, as the French stage direction goes.

I consider, and shall always consider, however much an event, which is likely to take place after Christmas, may seem to contradict me, that the conduct of Miss Isabel Laura Grant, in reference to transactions with me at Marrowgate was—I do not wish to use strong words— indefensible. This term can give no offence, because she contends, and will always contend (if I know her character), that her conduct needed no defence. Bella—it has come to that, and the name is easy to write—knew that I had no wish to be married, for I myself told her so in Marrowgate Pump-room, within a few days of our meeting. Moreover, if she had made up her mind, as proved to be the case, that the non-existence of this wish should be utterly forgotten, she ought to have satisfied herself, by some kind of inquiry, that no person had a claim upon my affections.

But about this she took no sort of trouble in the world.





THE BOX SEAT OF THE WAGGONETTE.

Then, when she had one way or another brought matters to a crisis, at which it became necessary for me to speak plainly, and proceed from a hypothetical cottage of love to a statement of income, a young lady of an exalted nature would have pointed out that I ought to consider well what I was doing, and that there were other young ladies, even at the hotel, with personal and pecuniary advantages equal to her own of whom she *knew at least* three to be disengaged. Had she acted like a true friend, as a girl who aspires to the sacred duties of wifehood ought to be able to act, she would have done anything but precipitate a result of which neither of us had dreamed that day month.

There was no such consideration shown ; and so resolved was this young lady to give me no chance of re-weighing consequences, that as we walked over the fields, from the Montpelier Spring (her sisters, Maria and Louisa preferred riding back with the rest of the waggonette party to breakfast, and I believe had been incited so to do by Bella), she actually told me that I had made her *so* happy. I will do her the justice to say that she had the grace to blush in making this statement—at least I think so—but the road goes through a long railway tunnel, which is rather dark. Anyhow, she fidgeted a good deal to get her veil right as we emerged. Well, the thing was done, and though I was not prepared to express regret that it was so, I repeat that I was not allowed fair play.

That expedition to Fountains Abbey had clenched the nail that was to unite Bella Grant's fate with mine. The box-seat of the waggonette held three, and somehow Miss Grant managed to be between me and the driver, who was deaf, or as I suspect was deaf when he chose to be, for I did not find him at all hard of hearing, one morning before the St. Leger, when I read him a little bit of advice sent to me by a sporting friend. Yet perhaps the word 'race' works a miracle on Yorkshire ears, and

I may wrong him. At all events he gave no sign of heeding anything that passed between Miss Bella and myself, and had to be poked at and shouted at when we wished to know anything about the places on the road. Bella said that he was deaf, but this evidence, under the circumstances, does not seem to me altogether decisive.

Miss Grant behaved very artfully when we got to the park in which the abbey is, and during our pic-nic sat by somebody else, and scarcely spoke to me, although I took the greatest pains to see that she was helped to chicken-wing and had ice in her champagne. But I think it was borne in upon her, as the Quakers say, that I might be going to walk to the ruins with a very pretty girl who had been telling me all that was known about the Abbey, and a great deal more; for Miss Bella contrived to be standing very near me, when the order to march was given, and to admire my cigar-case so pertinaciously, that we were well on the way together before she had nearly finished questioning me as to how I came by it. Looked at from her own point of view, her behaviour in this matter was lady-like, and from mine it was woman-like, by which I mean artful. She had avoided a continued flirtation, but she had not lost her fish. After this, she had everything her own way, and Nature conspired with her, for the day was lovely, and so hot that it was necessary to walk slowly, and to rest in shady places. Finally in the cool cloisters of the Catholic abbey that was said which will have to be re-affirmed, with appropriate theological expressions, before the altar of a Protestant place of worship.

I admit and avow that I felt no particular grievance in the arrangement we had made. Bella's family was good, she had very few brothers and sisters, and her father had a good deal of money. Also she was very charming, and I had every reason to believe that her affection for me, if of rapid growth, was healthy, and not like some loves that outgrow their strength

and go into consumptions. I could afford to marry a sensible girl with a soul above "Le Follet." But I could not help feeling that I had been rather surprised into the match, and that it was due to myself not to display any exuberant satisfaction with my lot. If I ever went beyond this negation of exaltation, and seemed indifferent or inattentive—as Bella more than once asserted was the case, making absurd poutings with her lips, and letting ridiculous films come over her eyes—it was accidental, and showed my sincerity of disposition.

Really, I was growing very fond indeed of Bella; but one does not parade one's feelings before the nobility, gentry, and clergy of a county, in hotel assembled. I believe that we conversed together a good deal more than would have been possible anywhere but at an hotel, and I could not have been a very secret lover, for three or four ladies praised Bella Grant to me, in a way which would have had no meaning if they had not perceived my regard for the young lady. In fact, they would have been officious and impertinent. Still, I was conscious that Miss Bella often looked wistful, and as if she were not entirely satisfied that I was entirely satisfied. This thought ought to have dictated a different line from that which it pleased her to adopt. It should have been her business to convince me of her extreme eligibility.

However, one day I gave her an opportunity not only of assuring herself of my devotion, but of letting other people know it, which I suppose is the chief thing with a woman. We had a dance at our hotel. Not, of course, a fast affair, to which Thomas, Richard, and Henry might come. It is still told as one of the terrible traditions of Marrowgate, that to some hotel ball (not at our place) there came two shopmen in human form—yes, shopmen from X—, and somehow contrived to dance—I hardly like to write this in a book which will be read by young persons, but the moral redeems the infamy of the story—to

dance with the daughter of a county member, and with the great-niece of a dowager marchioness. The tale is told in a low voice, and with befitting horror, but it is *true*. Such a thing could not have occurred at our house, where we all knew one another, and where any visitor must be vouched for. Our ball was everything that was social and decorous. It occurred to me that Bella should have a bouquet. Now there are no flowers in Marrowgate, except flowers of sulphur, and I telegraphed to my old friend Mrs. Buck, of Covent Garden, to forward me a very handsome bouquet. It duly arrived, and I sent the box to Bella's mamma's apartment. When it was about time for me to dress, I was making my way along a passage leading to my room, when Bella, who had been on the watch for me, glided from another passage, and was by my side, with the flowers in her hand.

"They are simply lovely, Charles dear," she said; "but you—you musn't be offended."

"Because they are lovely?" I asked.

"No; but because I cannot take them into the room. Not one girl in twenty will have any flowers, and not one will have anything so splendid as this. It would be so remarked, dear."

"I am very sorry, Bella. I thought to have pleased you."

"So you have, very much. I am very, very much pleased indeed, and I will keep the flowers as long as they live, perhaps as long as I live—there. But you will not mind my not taking them into the room to-night. If you had thought of giving the same to Maria and Louisa, it would not have—come, you are not to look displeased. I must go, and I am engaged to you for the first waltz."

She touched my hand as she went away, and of course the touch meant that if we had not been on the landing of an hotel, and so forth. But I do not think that wherever we had been, in my then temper, and so forth.

I did not go and dress. I went downstairs, and penetrated into a very sacred little room behind the bar, a private nook belonging to the ladies who managed the house. No one came beyond a compartment outside this, without special leave. But I had been favoured with the privilege of general admission. Nobody was there, and I sat down upon a snug little sofa, opposite the fire-place, and I suppose that I may as well write —sulked, although sulkiness is by no means my habit. I was exceedingly vexed. Why could not Bella show the bouquet which I had gone, or at least sent two hundred miles to fetch—four hundred, if you count both ways? Not be made the subject of remark! Most girls are glad enough to be remarked upon as engaged. She had made no secret of the affair, and had often sat by me on the benches in the garden for a long time together. There was some other reason. Yes, that must be so. There had been some new arrivals—men—I saw them at the *table d'hôte*. Louisa had mentioned that some acquaintances had been expected. Possibly one of them had come because Bella was here.

I need not trouble you with the wild-goose chase for which I had now mounted. I daresay that most young persons have performed that sporting feat in their time, or will do so. The former don't want to be reminded of their folly, and the latter will not take warning. Only I know that I managed to make myself particularly detestable to myself during the three quarters of an hour which I spent in that snug solitude. Snug! I used to think it so, but now I hated it.

I have an odd sort of memory, and, when I am out of temper, external objects fix themselves, but in a most disagreeable way, in my mind. I perfectly well recollect everything in that oblong slip of a room, on one of the longer sides of which I was. I remember that opposite, to my left, was an old engraving of a Dutch baker, and then a photograph of a horse and chaise, and

then a looking-glass, and then another photograph (of a lady), and then a clock, under which was a small curtain, concealing shelves, and then an old-fashioned mirror with balls round it ; and then, passing a big window, there was on the right-hand wall a coloured print of a view in Ireland, and then a portrait of some marvellous cow that had taken prizes, and then a print portrait of a provincial notoriety.

All these things I stared at, in turn, counting them backwards, and forwards, and hating them all. Then I went up to dress, yet not without more than half a mind to go to bed instead. At this distance of time I cannot help fancying that my dinner had been indigestible, or that some fluid had not done its influence kindly—yet our dinners and liquids were admirable ; I will say that for Yorkshire.

However, as I found myself beginning to hate everything in my bed-room with the same liberal spirit I had shown downstairs, I went rather savagely at my toilette, and I was soon ready. Then the ill-condition (I call it so, as I am writing for young persons at a serious season, but my feelings were quite natural, and therefore justifiable) came upon me again, and I would not go downstairs. I sat down and read the oldest book I had got, "Public Characters for 1778," which I had fetched from the library in despair, one wet day. I read of people who were somebodies in that year, and are nobodies now, and I pretended to myself to be interested in the way in which Captain Sabine had cut out some Malay pirates nearly a hundred years ago. I made notes of that exploit. All this while I knew, or at least hoped, that Bella was incessantly looking at the ball-room door, as the lady with the sweetest eyes that were ever seen looked for Camoens. I believe I felt angry with myself, as well as with all other organic and inorganic matter, but relented into a certain satisfaction that the candle had burned down into the socket. Bella might be false, I might be jealous,

but it was too ludicrous to sit in one's bed-room in the dark. I had heard the music a very long time. As for that first waltz, it had been over more than an hour.

Bella saw me as soon as I came in, and I think that she gave one earnest glance to assure herself that I had not been ill (she makes this statement), and then she hardly looked at me at all. There were about a hundred people in the great room, but it was not crowded. The musicians were playing away furiously, for they were in a gallery to which there is no access except by a ladder, which is taken away when they have mounted, and they cannot get out for refreshment. I made the circle of the room, and I suddenly noticed that Bella, Maria, and Louisa had all got bouquets. They were little ones but very prettily arranged. Three bouquets. Brought, of course, by one of the men—the friends—the new arrivals. Perhaps by that tall, coarse, mercantile-looking person, with large studs (handsome ones, though—of course this sort of man can get what money can buy), who was floundering through the Lancers with Miss Grant.

It gave me a pleasure to call her Miss Grant, to think of her as Miss Grant. But my soul speedily exalted itself against such a humiliation as I had received. I felt that more than sulking was required of me now. It was necessary that I should be dignified. Therefore, walking past Miss Grant, and so near that she had ample opportunity for observing the haughty play of my countenance (I did not much care about catching her eye, somehow), I left the room. I retired to our smoking chamber then entirely deserted, and having duly hated all the pictures, and an old pianoforte (made for the late Prince of Wales), I smoked a great many cigars very fast and went to bed. My dignity was in some sort appeased, but the sound of the music, which ascended for a very long time, did not exactly soothe my feelings. As I fell asleep, I fancied that the fiddles were laughing at me.

## II.

NEXT MORNING I was dressing before I was called, and as my answer to the knock that announced hot water did not prevent another knock, I went impatiently to the door, and the excellent and venerable chambermaid presented me with a note. It was clear that she knew and approved my engagement, for she was no indiscriminate carrier of *billets*, as certain indiscreet flirters had known, to their humiliation and dismay. The note was very short.

"You must be unwell, very unwell. *Do* let them send over to the doctor.—B."

"That is a nice, prosaic, businesslike way of writing," said I to myself, in a great rage. "If she had written, 'I am in agonies until I can explain, implore,' and so on. Send for the doctor. Send for the—"

But it may be thought by those who attribute bad passions to bad influences, that there was at least no occasion to do what I was going to advise, and that I was being looked after very carefully in the quarter in question.

When I got down to breakfast, neither Miss Bella Grant nor one of her party was there. This I was rather glad of. I made short work of my coffee, poached eggs, ham, marmalade, toast and the rest, and hastened into the garden to read the telegrams in the *Leeds Mercury*. These, which come to us at Marrowgate the first thing in the morning, are all the news one cares for there. I suppose the air is too bracing to leave us in the state of mental health in which one cares for mere politics, murders, and theatrical matters. I took up a position well in front of the hotel, where I (and anybody who might join me)

could be seen from the windows of the public and the private rooms. I could not quite explain to myself the reason for this precautionary measure, perhaps it was instinctive.

"Not much more in your telegrams than in mine, I suppose," said my especial friend, Colonel Cleveland, who had subjugated Indian provinces, and looked as if he could do it again, and without talking much about it. Indeed, I am ashamed to say that I never knew of his great exploits, until I read about them in history. He did not speak of them, but spoke a great deal about moths, which he was always collecting, and pinning to corks in a sort of sandwich box. He said that they did not feel. I am sure he thought they did not, or he would never have impaled them. I should think that they preferred being left to cling to walls, without the aid of pins—but I know nothing about it.

"There is nothing, Colonel. Will you change your tory gazette for my liberal *Mercury*?"

"You shall have the gazette, and I hope it will do you some good in your principles, but I won't have the other. By-the-way, I did not see you dancing last night."

"I did not dance. In fact, I had a headache."

"Those waters are too strong, that's it. They are strong. There's an old rhyme down here about somebody smelling them as he was taking a constitutional flight one morning, and feeling sure that he was not far from home. Was it the monks that taught the people to be always making sport of the enemy? That does not seem to have been a good trade policy, eh?"

But I was not at all inclined, just then, to discuss the education question of the middle ages. Another morning I could have given Colonel Cleveland fifty stories on the subject. To-day I could not remember one.

"I won't bore you," said the Colonel. "I see your head-

ache's not gone. But we'll have a drive, you and I only, in the afternoon, if you like. I have heard that there is some of my hunting to be done at Brimham Rocks. You won't mind reading, while I make my bag?"

"If I do not go to London, I will go with you, with pleasure."

"London be hanged! It's the best place in the world, but one gets tired of the best places and the best people too. By-the-way," said the veteran, in the kindest tone, "it's an awful liberty, but we've been rather intimate, and I'm old enough to be your father. Don't *you* be in a hurry to be tired of any good person. Forgive that, and I'll never say another word about it. I really beg your pardon."

"That you shan't; and I am deeply obliged, but——"

But the kind old soldier was marching off, bawling out something about taking care of a headache.

"Then the affair has got wind already," said I. "And of course he takes the wrong side. Takes the woman's side. Those fatherly old soldiers always do, and they ought to know better."

I went at my paper again, and the mental operation of the preceding night was renewed. I began to hate the paragraphs, and the people mentioned in them, and myself for returning again and again to the same old news. Then I lit a cigar, and had scarcely got it into work when Mrs. Denison came up, with her two pretty daughters, all great allies of mine in what I begin to look back upon as my happier days. They fairly surrounded me.

"No, you need not put your cigar out, Mr. Cornbury," said Mrs. Denison. "I am not going to stand here longer than enough to tell you that I have a great mind never to speak to you again."

"I never will," said Grace Denison.

"And I never will," said her sister Emily.

And yet, in spite of these fearful menaces, which were delivered with a good feminine emphasis, it did not seem to me that the speakers were very angry with me. Indeed, as I now see matters, what right had they to be angry with me? But that did not occur to me then. I seemed to have given people a title to lecture me. To be sure, they did not know my deep wrongs.

"I am very sorry," I said.

"O, very like being sorry," said Emily Denison, who was the more impulsive of the twain. "It looks like sorrow to be sitting smoking in the sun, reading a radical newspaper."

"A most excellent journal, Miss Emily Denison; and it is not my fault that the sun shines, I suppose. You made some remarks upon him for not shining the day before yesterday when you wanted to go to Bolton Abbey, and tire yourself out before the next night's ball."

"I wonder you dare to use the word ball," said Grace.

"Dance, then," I said, humbly.

"I hate misplaced levity," said Grace, sententiously. "Things are not to be done in that way, and then joked out of." The sentence was neither elegant nor explanatory, and yet I believe that we all understood it.

"I am in disgrace, somehow, it appears," I said.

"Yes, I should think that you were," said Mrs. Denison; "but as I always try to take an indulgent look at things, I hope something will be said or done to make amends. Now, girls, if you are coming to Bolton, come directly."

They went away; but I am not quite sure that if Bella could have seen the looks the girls gave me (especially Emily) Miss Grant would have been altogether satisfied with her champions. I do not think that I am vain, or apt to set too high an estimate on myself, but my glass shows that I am reasonably good-looking, and my income shows that I am reasonably clever. It may be

that the Misses Denison recognised these facts, and thought (especially Emily) that a gentleman might make a mistake, and yet not be altogether shut out from feminine compassion and comfort.

"Bella does not appear, and everybody else does," I said. "I will walk off to Knaresborough, I think, and——"

"And mingle your tears with the Dropping Well. I would, old fellow, if I were you," said a voice behind me. "Don't look cross," the speaker continued; "if a man talks out loud, it is politeness in the second person to suppose himself addressed."

"Don't bother me, Tom Foster, this morning."

"Who wants to bother you?" said my old college friend. "I meant to do you a good turn, and give you the consolations of religion—well, not that exactly; but you ought to remember what is said, *Varium et mutabile semper*—don't you know? I believe it is one of Solomon's Proverbs, and very right too."

"It is very right, Tom; and now go and play croquet with Miss Martin and her cousin. They are asking for you as plain as eyes can speak."

"Ah! Eyes. Yes, eyes. And if those articles could have spoken last night—but that's nothing. O, eyes!"

Repeating which noun, with varied exclamations annexed, Tom Foster went off, picked up a mallet, and saluted therewith.

"I will certainly go to Knaresborough," I said, but not aloud this time. And I was gathering myself up for departure, when a young lady tripped out at one of the ground-floor windows, and down the three steps which led from them to the garden. It was Louisa Grant.

"Can I say a word to you, Mr. Cornbury, unless you are too much occupied?" said Louisa. Yesterday it was "Charles;" and she would have interrupted me in a conversation with the Lord Chancellor.

"I can never be too much occupied to speak to you, Louisa, as you might, I think, be partly aware," I said, gravely.

"Oh, I don't know. Things change so that it would not have surprised me to be told to go about my business."

"I had hoped that Miss Louisa Grant thought me a gentleman."

"What she thinks is of very little consequence. A gentleman, more especially under certain circumstances, might have thought it becoming to make some kind of explanation—to explain in some kind of way—"

Louisa's vocabulary was limited, and it did not supply her with a third way of putting it; but she looked exceedingly angry; and—I may wrong her, but I believe that she was uncommonly near enforcing her argument with a stamp. No prettier foot could have been stamped in Yorkshire.

"Or to ask for some kind of explanation," I added; "but not having lately been fortunate in obtaining his wishes, he has held his tongue."

"If you think that we are going to put up with that sort of thing—" began the impetuous and colloquial Louisa. "There, I hate you! You have made me talk like a milliner; but the words would come, and I was speaking for somebody else, not myself—somebody, whom I love a hundred times better than myself, and who deserves that I should."

And there were honest tears in Louisa's honest eyes. I am not a victim to all descriptions of "weeps;" but when they are genuine—why, I don't like it.

"What do you wish us to do?" was Louisa's next question; and it was said almost humbly.

"I do not feel that I have any right to express any wish."

"You are not speaking like yourself. You are too good to say such things from your heart."

"I am glad of your good opinion. I am glad to have somebody's."

"If you have not everybody's, all the same as yesterday, whose doing is it but your own ? And yet you will not deign to say a single word of apology, or pave the way for what everybody wants."

"Everybody wants ?"

"Well, except you, perhaps. Why don't you see Bella ? I don't say that she can see you, because, if anybody ever cried her eyes out, that is what Bella has been doing since twelve o'clock last night, when she rushed to her room."

"She stayed, however till the last moment that dancing was allowed," I said, with a guess.

"Certainly, and danced the last dance ; and you would have been the first to remark upon a girl who exposed her feelings to a ball-room full of people. Is not that true ? and is not that reasonable ?"

"Very, if I could only be made to understand why there should have been any feelings to conceal."

"You talk like an idiot. There, I am vulgar again ; but you drive me wild with such a speech. What feelings ? You walked into the room, showed yourself, took care Bella should see you, and then disappeared. I won't talk of insult—somehow I can't think you the man to insult a girl—but was ever anything so cruel done since the very beginning of the world ?"

I was getting excited, too ; but I could not resist noticing the remote, yet exact date to which Louisa had thrown back her examination. I said—

"It appears to me that your sister does not take you into her confidence."

"My sister ! How dare you speak of her in that way ? Which sister ? what sister ? You mean Bella Laura—say so."

"Of course."

"Does not take me into her confidences ? I dare say that she may have confided many things to you that she has never

been prompted to tell me ; but we are one in heart and soul, and wrong to one is wrong to both."

" I could wrong neither ; that you ought to know."

" But I don't. Why did you leave the room and not return ?"

" Have you asked her why I did so ?"

" She can only guess at something ; but it is so miserably absurd and foolish an idea, that I wonder she can hold it for a moment. Do you mean that because you gave her a bouquet and she thought it better, as she explained to you—and she was quite right, and I should have done the same thing if I had been in the same case—what am I saying ?—yes ; do you mean that, because she did not carry your bouquet into the room, you were justified in your shameful conduct ?"

" No, Louisa. I have considered her refusal ; and if we never exchange another word, I shall always say that she spoke like a high-minded and delicate-minded girl. Even had she put the matter to me less gently, I should equally have recognised her good sense, to say nothing of a lady's right to wear what she pleases. It was her subsequent conduct that justified mine."

" What in the world did the poor girl do then ? I was in the room all the time. She danced a few dances for the look of the thing, but a nice time her partners must have had with her ; and when she had given up all hope of your return, she just held on till she could make her escape. There was supper ; but she was crying on her bed, not supping."

" A sad disappointment to the amiable gentleman who gave her the bouquet she wore instead of mine ! I saw he had extended his courtesy to all of you. So my present was left on the dressing-table, while his was carried about by Bella. She knows best what hopes she gave him to carry about in return."

The simile of the cloud suddenly shifting from across a landscape, leaving it in sunshine, is so old, that to use it amounts to

genius ; and none other occurs to me. That was what occurred in Louisa's face ; and in defiance of all Marrowgate proprieties (which are very proper) and all others, she set up a laugh that might almost have been heard at the Pump-room, and that is, bee-flight, three-quarters of a mile from where we stood.

Some persons have thought or at least said, that I have some affinity to the unpleasant character called a prig. I do not, of course, mean the word in the slang sense which implies dishonesty. Mr. Frank Cowley told me, in my own chambers that I should make a very good fellow one of these days, when I had been married, and learned larger views, but that at the time he spoke my autobiography would be an excellent study of priggishness. I am unaware that the sarcasm was merited, and I do not find its justification in any definition supplied by the dictionaries. His remark was elicited by some objections which I made to the modern costume in theatrical spectacle ; and upon that topic one of her Majesty's chief officials is of the same opinion as myself. A prig is defined as "a pert, conceited, saucy, pragmatical fellow," and this description does not apply to me.

But, I confess, that I like persons to conduct themselves with propriety ; and I did not consider that Miss Louisa Grant was so conducting herself in breaking out into the unlady-like shout of laughter. It attracted the notice of several residents in the hotel, and I naturally disliked such notice to be drawn upon one whom I had regarded as a probable connection of my own.

"I am gratified to afford you amusement, Miss Louisa," I said, gravely, "even though I am unable to understand its origin."

"You are an old dear," she replied, with increased levity ; "and now that I understand, do you know that I like you a great deal better than I ever thought I should ? You *can* feel, can you. I am so glad."

Thereupon the second Miss Grant made me a little courtesy, her eyes laughing in spite of her attempt to be serious, and she went into the house. I cannot say that I felt my dignity unimpaired by our interview, and in other circumstances I should have been more angry ; but Bella's behaviour had truly grieved me, and I confess that I was thinking more of her than of myself.

"All squared, all right, old boy," said Tom Foster, very needlessly leaving the croquet-ground to come to say this, and then walking back again, without waiting for any reply. He was right, too ; for I hate to be called "old boy," and he knew this.

I left the garden, and walked across the moor in the direction of a small pavilion, in which is one of the many waters of Marrowgate. At that time of the day this spring is unfrequented and I was in a mood to wish to be alone. When I reached the little temple, I found that even the attentive young person who filled the glasses with a fluid strongly suggestive of weak ink had left her post, and I took a chair, and proceeded to review the situation of affairs.

But the odds against me were very unfair. If sisters work together, they can do almost anything they like. The Misses Grant were very faithful allies. I was alone on that moor.

In a few minutes I saw a face at one of the windows, and the next minute the owner of the face stood at the door. It was Bella's other sister, Maria, who was a much quieter sort of girl than Louisa ; and at Maria I had looked with some favour on my arrival, and before Bella had settled it with the others that she would honour me with her preference.

"O, the girl is not here," said Miss Maria, calmly. "Then, perhaps, you would fill my tumbler for me ; if you do not mind the trouble."

I made a proper answer, for I hope I never forget how a gentle-

man should behave ; I raised the cover of the well, and obtained the water for the third Miss Grant. I presented the glass, without speaking. As I did so, I observed that she had in her hand one of the bouquets presented to the sisters over night by the coarse-looking mercantile person with the studs. Maria saw me notice this, smiled in a more saucy manner than was usual with her, and then began the elaborate process of holding the breath so as to avoid tasting the detestable water.

"No," she said, after an effort, "I can't take it to-day, and I won't. Unless I am going to offend you by not taking what you got for me ?"

"I can have no right to be offended at anything *you* may do, Miss Maria."

"Oh, I didn't know," said Maria. "Some people take offence when none has been given."

"That is a bad habit, Miss Maria, and it implies an objectionable nature."

"So it does, Mr. Sententious," replied Miss Maria Grant.

Now I hate nick-names, especially from female lips, and I did not answer. Then did Miss Maria, to my exceeding astonishment, poke her bouquet into my face, right under my very nose.

"Isn't it nice ?" she asked, in a taunting sort of way. "Isn't it lovely ? Isn't it Atkinson, and Piesse and Lubin, and Rimmel and all together ? And he looks as if he didn't like it ! What a wretch !"

And this was the quiet and serious Miss Grant, to whom I might possibly have thought of paying attention. It has been truly remarked, though I cannot at the moment give a reference to the authority, that the wisest man does not understand the least wise woman.

"Now he *is* offended," said Maria. "But it is of no use his holding his tongue. We will have it all talked out, and then he

may go to London, or wherever he pleases. Come in, Louisa and Bella ! " she cried.

Will it be believed that both those young persons just then passed the window, and came in at their sister's invitation ? There we were, all four in the temple. Three priestesses and one victim. It was quite classical.

But there is more to be believed. Both Bella and Louisa had got their bouquets, and bore them in their hands without the least attempt at concealment. In fact, Louisa rather flourished hers, but I have said that she was a demonstrative girl.

Bella quietly walked to the chair which I had left and sat down, and the sisters stood on each side of her, like supporters in a coat of arms. But it was quite plain that Louisa had told the truth on one point, and that Bella had been crying ; and, as I have already remarked, I have a great objection to real tears.

" Won't you shake hands with me ? " said Miss Grant, in rather a low voice, and looking up at me in a way that was almost piteous. It is not fair for a girl to look in that way, but I had been a sufferer from unfairness all through. I know that I ought to have been cold and distant, I might have fought against the words, but the look was too much for me. I hastened to take her hand, when that Louisa threw mine up in the air.

" Indeed, no, and that is not the way to treat him, Bella ; and I won't have it, and there's an end."

" Really——" I said.

" Really, indeed ! There's nothing real about you, so don't use a word that you've nothing to do with. What did we agree, Bella ? Now don't fly away from your bargain, for that shan't be."

Here Bella burst into tears, and looked at me very much as if she wished—well, wished her sisters were out of the way. I

think that she was going to get up, and come to me, but Maria laid her hand on Bella's arm.

"Certainly, you are to do as you promised, Bella," said Maria.

"Then—then give me my bit of st-st-string," sobbed Bella, quite piteously this time.

This was a most extraordinary request, I thought, all things considered. Her bit of string ! What on earth did she want a bit of string for ? Was she going to ask me to play at cat's-cradle ?

"There it is, Bella, dear," said Maria, producing a piece. It was gardener's string, I noticed, and this bewildered me more.

"The flowers," she said, in the same unhappy way.

Maria and Louisa each handed her a bouquet, she put them to her own, and then with trembling fingers tied the three together. I thought she would never have managed the knot ; but when the others tried to help her, she pushed their hands away rather hastily.

"There !" she said, holding out to me the united bouquets.

"What for, Bella ?" was all I could say in my puzzlement.

"That's as you—you gave it me—only not so nicely done up ; and now take it back again, and never—never—give me anything any m-more."

"For she won't have it," Louisa came in, like a clerk following up a clergyman.

It then occurred to me that I might, by possibility, have made a mistake, though I am not in the habit of doing so.

"As I gave it to you, Bella ?"

"Yes, of course," said Maria. "Only it is not his fault exactly, that he does not recognise his own flowers ; because you know, he never saw them, as he sent the box at once to our room."

"I—I—saw you were vexed," said Bella, "on the landing, and I determined that your flowers should come into the room,

so I divided the bouquet into three, one for each of us, and I thought you would guess—but if I had believed that you would have been so—cruel——”

I am not demonstrative, like Louisa, but—perhaps it was being in a temple—anyhow, I was kneeling by Bella, and she was crying over me, and I think that Louisa gave me a sort



of parting slap, and hurried away with Maria, and I know I have said that our marriage is arranged.

## SNOWED UP.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A FRENCH HEIRESS IN HER OWN CHATEAU."



### I.

FRANK MORLEY, a young man of six-and-twenty, was one of the heads of a great old firm of claret merchants, for more than a hundred years established in London and Bordeaux. His father had sent him to France to learn his business when he was quite a lad, in consequence of which his manners were excellent ; and he spoke like a Frenchman, with a slight accent of the South, hardly strong enough to mark him as provincial. For the last three years, since his father's death, he had lived at Bordeaux and managed that end of the business entirely, his partners, who, were oldish men, living in London.

Frank was clever, steady, hard-working, and thoroughly awake to his own interests. He meant to be a very rich man, to retire at forty, and not to marry till then. In spite of living abroad so much, he was unmistakably English, both in looks and ways ; but this did not prove a hindrance to his popularity among the French. He was well known at Bordeaux, and a great favourite there, admired for his liberality, his physical strength, his fearless openness of speech and manner. He never suspected, probably, that some of his young French friends laughed at him, and called him jeering names behind

his back—the only real satisfaction they could have, poor fellows, in their intercourse with such a provoking mass of advantages.

But Frank had one friend who really cared for him, though he borrowed money from Frank like the others. It was a true mutual liking that had drawn them together—the jolly, auburn-haired Frank Morley, and the black, sallow, melancholy Albert de Saint-Flor. Albert was as loyal to his friend Frank as to Henri Cinq himself. He knew all Frank's plans, and admired them. The idea of putting off one's marriage till one was forty met with his special approval after he had sounded Frank on the possibility of a marriage with his own only sister. This, it seemed, was far too high an honour for Frank to aspire to. It was necessary that he should marry an Englishwoman—of his own rank in life, he modestly added, being quite aware that the Saint-Flor family would look upon him as a mere *bourgeois*. Also he knew in his own mind that Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor was no longer young—how old he did not know ; but older than her brother, who was five-and-twenty—and Albert had several times assured him, thinking it probably a recommendation, that they were the image of each other. He spoke so positively, and yet with such good-humoured compliments, that Albert saw the idea was a hopeless one. But he did not swerve from his friendship with the obstinate Morley.

In the month of December 1879, early in that long painful winter, Frank chose to go to Paris on business, and Albert eagerly consented to go with him. They started on a snowy day ; and while they were yet some way south of Tours, at about five in the afternoon, the earth being wrapped in snow and the sky black and heavy with more, their train ran into a deep drift on the line, and it was soon too clear to the passengers that many hours of the night, at least, would be spent where they were. After the first shock, most of them bore this prospect

with the resignation of French people. But the one Englishman in the train, hanging himself out of the carriage-window, shouted to the nearest official, who answered by begging monsieur to sit down and be patient.

“Patient be hanged!” said Frank, or something equivalent in French. “I am not going to sit here and be frozen, or stifled, which is more likely. Look here, what do you call the nearest station?”

“Maupas!” shouted the official from the distance, as he plunged through the snow.

“Maupas! Why, Saint-Flor, that’s your place!” said Frank quite angrily to his friend, who jumped up in a state of tremendous excitement.

He had thought they must be at least eight leagues short of Maupas. But even now they were some distance from the château, which lay a mile beyond the station. Nothing would give him greater delight than to introduce his dear friend there, but it seemed to him a simple impossibility.

“A simple necessity,” said Frank, laughing. “Look at it in that light, and come along.”

Albert shrugged his shoulders, but his eyes shone with proud pleasure at the daring of his friend.

“My dear Frank,” he said, “I am ready to follow you to the world’s end.”

“As the door won’t open, we will begin by getting out of the window,” said Frank. “The best way at first will be along the roofs of the carriages.”

“Go, go on. I follow you, *mon brave!*”

An hour or two later these weary travellers stumbled up to the great iron-studded door of the Château de Maupas. Albert had lost his way once or twice, but at last the glimmer from the snow showed him the dark line of firs through which a rough narrow road approached the house. He was melancholy: this





"SHE SUDDENLY APPEARED IN A LOW-ARCHED DOORWAY."

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unexpected coming home did not seem to give him any pleasure. Frank, who knew that the Saint-Flors were poor and old-fashioned, did not himself expect a very hearty welcome, either from monsieur, madame, or mademoiselle. About that, however, he cared very little. All he wanted was supper and a bed, flattering himself that he would get on to Paris the next day.

A shabby man-servant received their wet greatcoats in the hall, which was high and large, and dimly lighted by a hanging lantern.

"Get my room ready, François, and one for monsieur, do you hear?" said Albert. "What time is it? Have they finished dinner."

"I was taking in the *bouilli*," answered François sepulchrally.

"Good; then we are in time. I have the appetite of a wolf—and you, Morley?"

"And I too," said Frank. "But, my dear fellow, we can't dine in these boots."

"No, no, come along to my room."

They were certainly a pair of disreputable objects, covered with snow, which was melting slowly on their hair, their moustaches, in fact, all over them. There were pools of water where they stood on the stone floor of the hall. Suddenly a bell rang sharply in some distant room.

"It is Monsieur le Baron for the *bouilli*," muttered François, and he shuffled off.

"Let us make haste," said Albert; and he was leading the way upstairs, having just reached the first step, when a lady's voice made Frank start violently. It sounded so sweet and strange in the desolate gloomy old house, where there seemed to be no welcome and no warmth.

"Do I hear Albert's voice?" said the lady.

She had suddenly appeared in a low-arched doorway, which

framed her in like a picture. Frank, who was the nearest made her a low bow. She curtsied with extreme politeness ; but Frank was sure that there was the faintest quiver of amusement about her mouth, and felt miserably conscious of being an absurd object. It was a new thing for him not to be quite satisfied with his own appearance.

"Ah, there you are, *ma belle!*" exclaimed Albert, and he marched up to the lady. "I dare not even allow myself to kiss your hand. May I present my friend, Monsieur Morley, to my sister, Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor ?"

"I am charmed to see you, monsieur," said the lady, smiling on Frank with a grave sweetness which reassured him. "But how did you bring yourself and your friend into this sad plight, my poor brother ? Tell me, then—you have walked in this frightful weather all the way from Bordeaux ?"

"No, indeed ; only from the railway. But I will explain presently," said Albert. "Excuse us a moment, dearest. Beg my father and mother to pardon this sudden intrusion, and to give us something to eat."

"But certainly, poor travellers ! Make haste, then. Ah, let me see—I will send old Marie to you with dry clothes."

Albert tore up-stairs followed by his friend, whose brain was in a strange commotion. Twenty railway accidents would have been less exciting than this encounter with Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor, whose pitying glance and smile, half pensive, half amused, seemed a revelation of something so completely new and charming. He thought he had never seen so picturesque a figure. She was rather tall, and very thin ; pale, in fact completely colourless ; but there was nothing painful or unhealthy in the look of her creamy skin. It was simply beautiful. Her face was delicate, full of expression, and very French. Her hair was almost black. She was dressed in a thick, soft, white stuff, with black ribbons ; the only colour she had was in her

eyes, which were those truly violet eyes possessed by one woman in a million.

As he hastily prepared himself to appear before this angel at dinner, Frank shouted to Albert, who was in an adjoining room with the door open,

"I thought you told me that you and mademoiselle your sister were like each other?"

"My dear friend, our features are precisely the same."

"Then you are a much handsomer fellow than I took you for," said Frank, half to himself, but Albert was listening.

"Aha, you are always so droll! You find her handsome, then, my sister?"

"She is perfectly beautiful," said Frank, in a lower voice still.

There was a suppressed irritation about the tone of these remarks which gave Albert a certain malicious pleasure. He laughed to himself as he stood before the chimney-glass brushing up his black hair.

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## II.

"MONSIEUR LE BARON and Madame la Baronne de Saint-Flor were by no means such agreeable people as their son and daughter. They were stiff with an old-fashioned provincial stiffness. The Baron had been in the navy, had gray whiskers and a red ribbon in his button-hole. Madame was a dark, grave, little woman with an important manner. They were both inclined to look on an Englishman as their natural enemy, and on this special one as a thing of inferior creation. With no title, not even in the army or navy, a merchant actually—but that must be some mistake, the Baronne was sure. Her son,

with all his modern ideas, would never have brought as guest to Château Maupas a person who made his living by buying and selling.

Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Flor made these remarks to each other privately. If they had known the length to which Albert's ideas had gone, led by common sense and affection for his friend, perhaps they would hardly have behaved to Frank with even outward courtesy. But in that they were faultless: they both treated him with ceremonious politeness.

Somehow—Frank hardly knew how it happened—he found himself staying on, day after day, at the château. He had his excuses. The roads were blocked with snow; the newspapers brought terrible accounts of the state of Paris buried in snow; so that all work was stopped, and the poor were starving. Madame de Saint-Flor insisted that her son should not risk his life on the railway in such weather, and was obliged to express polite anxiety about her guest too. Frank knew it was all nonsense; that under ordinary circumstances mountains of snow would not have kept him in a dismal old place like this, with nothing to do but smoke and stare at the ancient tomes in the library, appear at meals when the bell clanged, listen to the eternal prosings of Monsieur le Baron, read the *Union* with its one-sided politics, hand madame her coffee after dinner. His active limbs could not be exercised by strolling backwards and forwards along the swept path to the stables, where two fat old horses stood eating their heads off. He felt inclined to suggest a game of "Going to Jerusalem," as he had seen it played by a number of lively people in a great house in the North one wet day. The long corridors of the château would have done well for such a game; but he looked at his four companions, and did not suggest it.

After all he did not really want any amusement. He was "deeply interested"—that was the way he put it to himself—

in Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor, and was wondering how he could hint to Albert that it was all humbug about waiting till he was forty, and marrying a countrywoman of his own. Of course he had very little talk with her, and their acquaintance did not seem to advance much. The sweet welcoming manner, the sympathetic smiles of the first evening, seemed to be her highest mark. In her mother's presence she scarcely ever went so far, and she and Frank were never alone together. Now and then their eyes met, and though it was only for an instant, Frank felt a strong deep excitement, a longing to make her look at him again.

By and by, when he was satisfied that she in her strange way was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, it dawned on him that her usual expression was intensely sad; that when her mouth and eyes were quiet, and her face bent over the tapestry she worked at for hours together, she looked as if she could never smile again. Frank thought about her day and night. He trembled at every sign of a thaw, and the white flakes as they steadily descended were more precious to him than showers of gold. Madame de Saint-Flor came into the dining-room one morning and found him standing at the window whistling cheerfully, as he stared out into a thick snow-storm.

"You are most unfortunate, monsieur," she said. "Instead of improving, the weather seems to grow worse. I sympathise most truly with both you and Albert."

"You are very good, madame," said Frank, smiling. "I assure you that I never was more happy and contented. If it had not been for this obliging snow, I might never have known Albert's relations."

"You make the bad weather pass very pleasantly for us," said the Baronne graciously. "We too are glad to know our son's best friend."

She could not resist the conviction that this merchant was

like a gentleman, though it half provoked her that he should take their hospitality for granted in this sort of way.

At breakfast that day the talk happened to turn on architecture, and Monsieur de Saint-Flor assured Frank that the house which sheltered him at that instant was a pure specimen of François Premier. The outer walls and fortifications had of course been pulled down : there had formerly been eight corner towers, of which only one remained, the old disused colombier. But the three pavilions of the house, itself, with the galleries connecting them, stood precisely as the sixteenth century had left them. Monsieur de Saint-Flor told his companions that he was proud of their very dilapidation, and would never consent to their being restored. He remarked that restoration was the tomb of history. Frank, who had often heard Albert speak of the old château in a very different strain, was irreverent enough to wonder whether a good balance at his banker's would not alter M. le Baron's opinion. He discovered, however, that Marguérite—this was her lovely name, by which the bold Englishman already called her in his dreams—had a very affectionate admiration for the old place ; she looked up and smiled, and joined in the conversation quite eagerly.

After breakfast Albert walked down with his father to the village, half a mile off, to settle some business at the Mairie. Frank, after wandering all round the château, even under the rugged walls of the south front, where there was a patch of ground railed off and planted with shrubs, and where he saw something that startled him a good deal, made his way back to the salon windows, where he looked in and saw Marguérite sitting over her tapestry. The wild old place with its long history, its owners with their stiff old-fashioned ways, the stern winter that blocked it in, the dead silence, only broken by the fall of a mass of snow from some over-laden tree, and now a real mystery to account, as it were, for all this suggestiveness—

these were certainly strange surroundings for a matter-of-fact young Saxon. Marguérite herself was like an enchanted lady, so silent and lovely, and always dressed in white and black, like a nun, or a creature with some sad history. It was a privilege to find her alone, and he hurried into the room, where she welcomed him with a smile. He stood and watched her needle as it passed in and out among the coloured arabesques she was working.

"Have you been examining our architecture, monsieur ?" she said. "I saw you wandering round the house."

"Yes, mademoiselle. And I saw something that puzzled me ; perhaps you can explain it ?"

Marguérite dropped her needle, leaned back, and fixed her eyes on him ; the deep, wondering sadness in them appalled the young man.

"Do not distress yourself," he said, colouring. "It is too curious of me to notice it, perhaps."

"What was it ? I should like you to tell me."

"Well, I was under the windows of the south pavilion, where the garden is railed off, you know. The windows are barred, but one of them was open, and an old lady was standing at it. Her hair was white. She had nothing on her head, I was afraid she would catch cold. She looked at me, and waved her hand through the bars. I took off my hat, and she called out suddenly, 'Take care what you are doing, monsieur !' and then she turned away and I saw no more of her. Mademoiselle, perhaps I had no business in that part of the garden ?"

"No, no, you had not," repeated Marguérite hastily.

"No one told me to keep out of it," said Frank in a low voice, looking at her intently.

She stooped forward over her work, and took up her needle again ; but her fingers were trembling, he saw, so that she could not guide it. He saw that she was flushing slowly and deeply,

her whole face and neck changed from their usual ivory to rosy red. She stooped forward still more, and suddenly a tear fell, shining on the work. Then she got up with a quick movement, and was going to leave the room, but to do this she had to pass Frank, and he was not inclined to let her go so easily.

"At least forgive me before you go, mademoiselle?" he said, with an air of the deepest penitence. "What have I said or done? I am perfectly wretched. I shall go out and shoot myself."

At this threat a smile just quivered about Marguérite's mouth.

"I beg you will do no such thing!" she said with a momentary glance and a renewed blush. "I am very foolish. I must tell you the truth. The old lady you saw is an aunt of ours. We have all lived here together for the last nine or ten years. She is peculiar, and has rooms of her own in that part of the house. She does not like strangers—never sees any one—I think you had better not go near her again."

Frank bowed.

"I am very sorry, indeed, that I intruded on her," he said. "But no one had given me a hint of her existence."

"She prefers to be unknown," said Marguérite, and she sighed deeply as she turned away to open the door.

Frank Morley always prided himself on his knowledge of foreign life and customs. He used to talk finely of meeting foreigners on their own ground; but it seems as if he must just then have forgotten where he was, carried away by the excitement of the moment. Forgetting all the proprieties, he threw himself—figuratively—at the feet of Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor.

"This is not a place for you; you are not happy here!" he burst forth; and then he told her that he loved her passionately, and asked her if he must be miserable for life.

She clasped her hands, and retreated from him a step or two, for at that moment Frank was very tragical. She looked extremely surprised, as well she might, at his extraordinary breach of etiquette. But she did not seem angry, and she made no effort to leave the room.

"Ah, what are you saying?" she whispered. "You forget—you forget—"

"What do I forget?" said Frank. "Is there anything I ought to remember? Are you offended? Will you answer me?"

She shook her head. Presently, after more prayers and eager questions, she confessed that she did not hate him—no why should she? But he had surprised her very much, and—in fact, she did not know what to say.

"I ought to have spoken first to your father!" cried Frank, suddenly recollecting himself. "But that roundabout fashion is all very well for those who don't care as I do. Are you angry? Do you wish that I had spoken to him first?"

"I don't know—everything is strange," said Marguérite. "It is only—because I am afraid he will think that you ought. We always do, you know."

"Then you will let me speak to him now!" exclaimed Frank, in immense excitement.

"You frighten me—you are so terribly English. Can I prevent you?"

As the Baron was half a mile off through the snow, and as Frank felt that his part of the business must be managed through Albert with all possible formality, he did not find it necessary to leave off his love-making at this point, unorthodox as it was. Marguérite, with all her charm, was a puzzle to him. There seemed to be more wistful sadness than ever in those wonderful violet eyes, as she looked up at him; a sort of sad indifference in her manner too, though through it all he knew that she belonged to him, and that she recognised the fact. For some

minutes she seemed to be trying to say something, to give him some warning ; she had a way of lifting up her hand, as if to check him in his protestations.

"Let me speak," she said at last ; "let me tell you something. You are making a sad mistake ; it may be only the beginning of the end. Do you believe me ? Are you superstitious at all ?"

"Not in the least, thank heaven," said Frank. "And I never make mistakes. Are *you* superstitious? Is there anything that makes you afraid for yourself? Is it leaving your country ?"

"I am not afraid for myself," she answered. "And the superstition—it is all nonsense, after all. But what did I want to say to you ? Ah, this ! I am not a girl, you know. I am a woman, more than twenty-six years old. I have suffered a great deal. I have not much to give you, except just myself."

"What do I want more ?" said Frank. "Yes, one knows you have suffered, even by your dress. Do you never wear even a blue ribbon, Marguérite ?"

She looked at him solemnly for a moment, and then smiled.

"No," she said ; "but you must not ask me why. Perhaps some day I may tell you. Now I must not stay here with you any longer. Open the door, if you please, and let me go."

Frank obeyed. She paused in the doorway, under the shadow of the velvet curtain ; laid two fingers on her lips and looked at him, deeply, intently, as if she was asking him some question on the answer to which her life depended. He thought afterwards that he had never seen anything so extraordinary.

"You love me ?" she said, under her breath, and without waiting for any sort of reply she glided away and was gone. He stood for at least two minutes with the curtain in his hand, staring in a sort of bewilderment, long after she had vanished.

## III.

A FEW weeks later, after his visit to frozen Paris, Frank Morley found himself once more at Château Maupas, this time, wonderful to tell, as the accepted lover of Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor. Frank never knew, and did not much try to find out, how Albert had conquered the prejudices of his parents. There may have been more reasons than one for their consenting. Besides the solid advantage of belonging to a rich and generous Englishman, this marriage was, perhaps, seen by them to be a way out of a painful difficulty. Frank was afterwards conscious that the whole explanation was very clear, if he had cared to think it out; but he was a chivalrous fellow, and thinking it out seemed almost an impertinence, both to the poor proud people who bowed their heads in such a stately way to circumstances, and to their beautiful unhappy daughter. He came to Maupas by special invitation, on his way back to Bordeaux, joining Albert, who had gone before to smooth the way for him.

The snow was gone, but the weather was still bitterly cold; a frosty wind made music among the dark shivering firs, and howled dismally about the roofs of the château. Frank thought it all looked even more desolate than when it was buried in snow, and there was hardly enough cheerfulness indoors to make up for the dismal weather.

Albert was the only person who received him with any animation. Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Flor were grave and polite; Marguérite, though her smile made him understand that he was very welcome, looked, if possible, sadder than ever.

Her eyelids were heavy, as if she had been crying. By the end of the evening, the discovery that they were not to be left

alone together had thrown Frank into a state bordering on frenzy. What was the use of being engaged if they were to behave to each other like strangers, if they might not even talk unheard by other people? Frank resolved that either these manners and customs should give way before his English will, or else that he would leave the château the next day, and see none of them again till it was time to be married. He could not annoy his lady-love and her parents by any open rebellion, but he promised himself that Albert should know his mind on the subject; and he gave it him that evening in the smoking-room, after Monsieur de Saint-Flor had left them and gone to bed.

"Certainly, my dear friend; what you ask is only reasonable," said the amiable Albert. "Trust to me. I will do everything. My mother naturally keeps to her own ways, and expects Marguérite to conform to them. But I will arrange that you shall have an interview to-morrow. Trust to me."

"Thank you," said Frank, with satirical earnestness. "If you fail to make that arrangement, sir, I shall make it myself."

He smoked in silence for a few minutes. Albert also looked very grave, perceiving that his friend was out of temper, and perhaps feeling himself in an awkward position between these jarring nationalities.

"Marguérite looks terribly sad. What on earth is the matter with her? As I have no chance of asking herself, I must ask you," said Frank presently.

"How should I know? She is of a melancholy temperament," said Albert.

"There I differ from you. She is as capable of being happy as any one else. Do you know of anything that ought to make her unhappy at this moment?"

Frank fixed his eyes on Albert's thin dark face, which certainly looked grave and puzzled at the question. But it was answered immediately.

"Nothing, I should say, that ought to make her unhappy."

"What is it, then? There is something."

Albert shrugged his shoulders, and became impenetrable.

Presently they went up-stairs together. The young Frenchman left his future brother-in-law, still rather injured and sulky, in a large state bedroom, given him in honour of his new position in the family. A fire was burning on the low hearth. Two candles hardly lighted the high dark room, which was hung with old faded tapestry. The flames, as they flared and fell, seemed to make a sudden stir among the ghostly figures on the walls. A crowd of pale-faced hunters on white horses would come riding forward, dogs would run among trees, peacocks would wave their once shining tails in the light.

Frank, as he had told Marguérite, was not superstitious. He glanced once round the room, and then, pulling up a great chair in front of the fire, sat down and thought about that sad white face, those dear wistful eyes that seemed to be for ever asking the same question that once had made its way into words, "You love me?"—a question which, it seemed to him, he had never been allowed to answer properly. Could she doubt him? Was that why she looked so sad? Had she consented to this match for any reason but to please herself—any idea of duty to her family? He promised himself to have that all made clear tomorrow.

A little noise, like a door opening gently, made him turn his head and look round the room again: seeing nothing, he supposed there must be rats behind the wainscot, and returned to the fire and his meditations. At the far corner of the room there was a door opening into a dressing-room, which again communicated with the passages. Frank, full of other thoughts, had not noticed this entrance; and now he was not at all aware that a hand was pushing the dressing-room door, and that eyes were peeping at him from behind it. Footsteps on the boards

of his room, however, with the slight tap of a stick, slowly approaching him, made him spring from his chair in real surprise.

Standing by the table, on which François had arranged the materials for *eau sucrée*, was a small elderly lady, dressed in black, with a fair sharp face, a suspicious expression, and a quantity of white hair rolled up high over a cushion. She wore long gloves, and carried a cane in her hand. Frank stared at her in speechless surprise.

"I am not a ghost, monsieur, and you have seen me before," she said. Her voice had a sort of disagreeable snap in it.

Frank recognised the old aunt who had looked out of her window that snowy morning, and had told him to take care what he was doing. He bowed politely.

"Pardon me, madame. I remember you very well," he said.  
"Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing at all," she said, with a slight toss of her head. "I am come here to do you a kindness. Give me a chair. Is it true that you are to marry my niece, Mademoiselle de Saint-Flor?"

She sat down, placed her feet on a footstool, and looked at him magisterially. Frank thought she was probably mad. He stood opposite to her, at the further end of the table, and answered her very meekly.

"Yes, madame, I am to have that honour."

"I suspected it from the moment I saw you in the garden, and since then I have heard all about it. My brother was obliged to tell me. He can never keep a secret, poor man. I suppose he thought I had forgotten the past, or that I should not venture to interfere again. But no, I would not sit in my tower and see a fine young man sacrificed. Did you ever hear of Grégoire de la Masselière?"

"No," said Frank, as she waited for an answer.

"Ah, I thought not. Or of Jules de Marigny?"

"No."

"Or of my son, Léon de Maupas, and his brother Célestin?"

"No, madame."

"Very well. Listen, and I will tell you a little history about those four young men. It is more than nine years since the war. In those days I and my two sons lived here in this house, and my brother and his wife and those children of his were miserably poor people living at Tours. Out of kindness to my brother I arranged that my elder son, the Comte de Maupas, should marry that girl Marguérite, though I never cared for her—to my eyes she always had misfortune written on her face. But my son admired her, and he was willing enough. She was a mere child then. Well, they were betrothed, and then the war broke out, and my son Léon went straight to the front, and was killed in the first battle. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, madame," said Frank gravely.

"The story improves as it goes on. After that, in the winter we arranged that my second son, Célestin, should marry Marguérite. I did it all out of kindness to my brother, remember. Célestin also was in the army. He was killed in the spring in the last battle."

Frank could not restrain a slight shiver. There was something quite awful in the Comtesse's sharp voice, her cold eyes, her air of repressed excitement, with quick nervous little movements of her two thin hands.

"After that," she said, "you would have thought, perhaps, they might have had the decency to send the girl to a convent. But no; she must make a good match in spite of everything. They waited only two years, and then they arranged a marriage for her with Jules de Marigny. He looked as strong and handsome as yourself. But I knew he would not live—why should he, when my sons died? A week before the marriage he was out shooting, and he shot himself by accident—accident!"

Madame de Maupas raised her voice almost to a scream, and ended this part of her story with a little shrill laugh, which made Frank feel colder than ever.

"Good," she said, going on more quietly. "Now we come to the fourth, to Grégoire de la Masselière. He was only three years ago—for, let me tell you, people talked about all this, and saw plainly that it would be tempting Fate to ally themselves with such an unlucky young person. But this worthy man had been abroad for some years in the colonies—I don't know where. He came home to find a wife. He had plenty of money and some brains. He saw Marguérite, and proposed for her at once to her father. Of course he was accepted, they were only too glad. He came to this house, where my dear relations were living with me—it is *my* house, monsieur, and not my brother's at all—and they lodged him in this very room. I never see visitors. Since my great griefs I have avoided all strangers, have lived alone, as you know, though under the same roof with those others.

"Well, I saw the good fat man stumping about in the garden one summer evening, looking so prosperous and contented that I felt sincerely sorry for him. Why should this poor creature die too? I said to myself. I knew very well that Marguérite's history would not be told to him, unless I told it. I made up my mind to save him, if he chose to be saved. I came to him in the night, as I come to you now. My dear monsieur, I terrified that poor sheep so utterly out of his senses that he fled from Maupas the next morning, and wrote from Paris to my brother to say that he had changed his mind about marrying. Heavens, how I laughed when the Baron came to me with the letter in his hand!"

Frank listened with the deepest attention to all this. The history of M. de la Masselière seemed to do him good; for when it was finished he was smiling quite comfortably.

" Well ? " said Madame de Maupas, looking at him hard.

" Madame ? "

" Well, have you been listening ? Do you understand me ? "

" I have listened to every word ; but you must excuse me if I cannot feel sure of your object."

" My object ! I had no idea Englishmen were so dull. To save you, of course, as I saved Grégoire de la Masselière."

" You really hope, madame, to find me such a dastardly coward as M. de la Masselière—that poor sheep, as you justly call him ? Englishmen are dull, no doubt. They don't understand being expected to behave dishonourably."

" Ah, indeed ! Then you will not give up my niece ? "

" Literally, madame, I will die first."

Frank coloured scarlet, and spoke with almost sublime energy. Afterwards he was half-amused, half-grieved at himself, for having flown out in this manner to a poor old mad woman. Madame de Maupas seemed deeply impressed. She got up, trembling a little, and leaning on her stick.

" Very well. Please yourself. I do not wish to see you again. You are very ungrateful, and no doubt there is a bitter punishment in store for you. You also will die, and your death will break the girl's heart. I understand that she cares for you more than for any of them. I wish you good evening."

She departed by the way she had come: through the dressing-room, and so into a narrow passage, which led to her own part of the house. Frank opened the doors for her, and shut and locked them securely when she was gone. He then returned to his chair before the red smouldering fire, to muse over the strange explanation of his Marguérite's sadness.

## IV.

ALBERT kept his word, and the next day after breakfast Frank found himself left alone in the salon with Marguérite. He poured out his feelings with the demonstrative candour natural to him, which did not seem to offend this French lady. Her English lover seemed to her a charming and wonderful creature; perhaps a little wild and unmanageable, but still a creature with whom one could be amazingly happy—if only things would go well. The shadow of the past still clouded her eyes and saddened her smile. Could any mortal man be master of Fate? Certainly, if any one, Frank Morley.

"I know you think me very sad and stupid," she said by and by. "Believe me, I have had a good deal to make me so. Only take care of yourself, and I shall forget it all presently."

"Am I in any danger, then?" said Frank.

"O no; not any real danger! But I think we are an unlucky family. Perhaps some day I may be able to tell you why."

"Tell me now, can't you? But in the mean time you need hardly wear mourning for me in prospect, Marguérite. I have not the smallest intention of dying at present."

He was twining one of her black ribbons round his fingers as he spoke.

"Ah," she said, with almost a little cry, "I ought never to have allowed it. I ought never to have said 'Yes.' I ought to have cared more—ah, Frank, I have been selfish, and selfishness is sure to be punished."

"Nonsense! What are you afraid of?" said Frank, gazing earnestly into her face. She shook her head, and looked down. Then she lifted her eyes again with a little air of proud resolution.

"I will tell you," she said, "and then you will be warned, perhaps, and go away. You ought to have known it all before ; you have been deceived. We have all joined in deceiving you. At first I did not think what I was doing, but now I know. Frank, I thought it would be easier to die than to tell you all the story ; but now I will, for you are giving yourself ignorantly. And I will not have it ; you are too dear and generous."

Frank smiled as he listened and watched her face.

"I think you are disturbing yourself about nothing, my dear child," he said.

"Indeed I am not. Ah, you would not say that if you knew what pain it is to me, how all the old pain comes back ! Only this is fifty thousand times worse, because I do believe—"

"That you love me, and I love you." Frank finished her speech for her. "I should say that made it fifty thousand times better. It strikes me you don't quite understand the force of what you are saying. Under those circumstances is it likely that I should give you up, whatever you might have to tell me ? Listen. You are like some princess in a fairy tale, who put all her lovers to death if they couldn't answer a certain question : What is my thought like ? Don't you know ? Well, lots of them came to an untimely end, but at last the right man came and answered it. He always does. Your question was different. You asked it me one morning as you went out of that door, and would not stop to hear the answer, because you knew it would be the right one. So altogether I don't see what there is to vex yourself about."

Frank spoke very deliberately, with a cool reasoning air. A look of great surprise came into Marguérite's face ; she flushed up as she had done that morning, which both she and Frank remembered so well.

"You say very strange things," she murmured, after a little silence.

"Is there anything quite untrue and ridiculous in what I have said?"

"O Frank, you puzzle me completely."

"You see, you need not trouble yourself to tell me anything, my dear Marguérite. And as for pain, old or new, don't mention the subject again, please. You are going to be happy, and you will oblige me by taking off these horrid black ribbons."

"Frank! You know, and it makes no difference?"

"It makes this difference—that I will not wait for you more than a month. I am not going to let you stay in this gloomy place, with ghosts and mad people, a day longer than I can help."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* It was my aunt; you have seen her! When was it? What did she say to you?"

She was very much agitated. Frank soothed her as well as he could, and told her by degrees the story of his visit from Madame de Maupas. Marguérite cried a little, and could hardly believe that he was uninfluenced by all the horrors he had heard. Frank had to soothe and reassure her all over again. By and by she looked up at him, her eyes smiling, the wild weary look in them gone for ever.

"I am happy now," she said. "I feel the sunshine; there is no more cold wind;" and she broke into a little joyful laugh. "After all, this is a very good world," she said.

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V.

FRANK afterwards described his interview with Madame de Maupas in a much more unvarnished way to her nephew Albert, who told him that all her story was true. He added that the poor lady, always peculiar, had been a little touched in her wits

since the war and the death of her sons. She had become superstitious and revengeful, throwing all the blame of their deaths on the ill-luck of Marguérite. Her late husband's brother, the present Comte de Maupas, was a thorough Parisian, and had no use for such a middle-age abode as the Château de Maupas. He was glad that the Saint-Flors should make their home there, and take charge of the old lady; and having no children of his own, he meant to leave the place to Albert, with the small quantity of land that remained to it.

It seemed only right that Frank should know all the family history, the chain of circumstances which had led to his meeting with Marguérite. It was a rough way by which he had reached her, certainly: of battlefields and dying men, accidents and terrors, the derangement of one person, the cowardice and superstition of another. Trains running into snowdrifts, a struggle with the elements, a ghostly old castle blocked in with snow. Through all these difficulties the fair sorrowful Frenchwoman and the sturdy Englishman had advanced to meet each other, and now Frank was resolved that Marguérite should forget the past dimness of her life in its present beauty and brightness.

He took a fine house at Bordeaux and furnished it splendidly for his bride. He brought her there in the spring, dressed all in lovely rose-pink, which made her complexion look like driven snow, and her eyes of a deeper and more wonderful blue than ever. Albert, when he visited them, hardly knew his sister; she looked so pretty and happy and young.

Madame Morley, *née* de Saint-Flor, gives the most charming parties, and is already known as the most agreeable hostess in that part of France. With Frank's help she has introduced something in imitation of an English garden-party, which was very popular this summer. There a few of the more advanced young married ladies might be seen playing at lawn-tennis, a

game in which Marguérite herself, much as she liked to watch her husband playing it, could never be persuaded to join. Still people said she was entirely English. What could be more English than her marriage ! It was evident that she and Frank Morley adored each other ; and there was even a floating rumour that they arranged it all between themselves, before M. de Saint-Flor heard a word about it. That, however, was pronounced incredible. There is no limit to the extravagances of gossip.

The last night that Frank spent at Château Maupas, he found on his table a case of diamond ornaments, with a note addressed to himself, written in so thin and shaky a hand that he could hardly decipher it.

"I give these to you, that you may give them to your Marguérite. I will not see her ; but I congratulate her on her marriage with a brave man who loves her, and will teach her how to live.

"COMTESSE DRE. DE MAUPAS."

Frank thought there was some method in the old lady's madness, after all.



## CROSSED IN LOVE.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. CALDECOTT.

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### I.

MY Aunt Nancy was crossed in love I heard this fact from my earliest childhood, and pondered over it until I grew into womanhood. I have sat by the hour nursing my doll, and wondering what it was to be crossed in love. I had heard of being cross-gartered, cross-grained, cross-examined, and I had been myself cross-questioned, until I scarcely knew whether I spoke the truth or not ; but to be crossed in love passed my understanding. Should I ever be crossed in love ? and if so must I appear like Aunt Nancy ? I shuddered at the idea. She was my father's sister, and he always told me that she had been a great beauty and the toast of the county, but that she had been crossed in love, and I must ask no questions. As I had a proper filial fear of my father, and had neither mother, brother, nor sister, I was compelled to hold my tongue and wonder on.

I fervently prayed that I might never be either crossed in love, or the toast of the county. "A great beauty," the maids said I was, and I had no objection to this.

In Aunt Nancy the toast of the county appeared in the guise of a tall, gaunt woman, with sharp, marked features, piercing black eyes, sallow complexion, and very bad temper. The toast of the

county was dressed in a costume peculiar to herself. She wore what had been called in her young days a green Joseph,—a name which set my wits to work, as did everything connected with Aunt Nancy. This Joseph was a riding habit, yellow-buttoned, and thirty years old at least. Whether the head-dress was a continuation of the Joseph I could never determine. It consisted of a fillet of black crêpe, bound round the head so as effectually to conceal the hair, and losing itself in the Joseph behind.

Aunt Nancy lived in the village of which my father was rector. She was reputed rich ; she was unquestionably parsimonious. Her one maid-servant used to make sad complaints to me of the poor and insufficient food provided for parlour and kitchen. Aunt Nancy's peculiarities caused respectable servants to leave her ; so she had to put up with the young and rough.

I once asked this melancholy maid-of-all-work if she could tell me what it was to be crossed in love, assuring her that Aunt Nancy had been thus crossed. She had a ready explanation, which she gave me in the broad dialect of our native county.

"Why miss," she said, "it be boxes in the year, and bother from morning to night ; keeping at home o' Zundays, and scolding Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Zaturdays. It be low wages and no holidays. It be old clothes a-patched till you don' know what the vust 'terial war ; musty bandboxes, vull o' muslins an' laces, a hunderd year old! rickaty vurniture, an' a clock as won't go, put 'im as you will. Darn that clock ! I do wine' un, an' wine' un, an' he be just like missus, hurzelf, the more you do try, the more cantankerous he be. An' hur do zay I do keep un back'ards a purpose, when he's too old an' creaky an' wheezy to go on, he be."

I condoled with Becky upon her unfortunate state, but was none the nearer to the solution of the mystery. I sometimes

fancied it lay hidden in a secret chamber of Aunt Nancy's house, which had never been opened within the memory of any of my contemporaries, and of which the blind-covered windows were alone visible to the curious. I felt sure it was haunted by the ghost of that love-crosser I was always dreaming about, and never passed its cobwebbed door without a shudder.

My cousin Rob and I had many discussions and quarrels about Aunt Nancy. As she declined seeing that son and heir of the family honours and somewhat dilapidated property when he occasionally came to pay my father and me a visit, he was both jealous and angry. I, on my part, was fond of Aunt Nancy, and when Cousin Rob abused her I took up her defence, and excused her peculiarities, by explaining that she was crossed in love. I entreated him to discover what that was. As he was fresh from school, his explanations were lucid and classical in the extreme.

"Why, it's bosh, Minnie," he would say. "Nobody falls in love now, much less is crossed. A fellow might see a pretty girl like you, now, and play with her, and walk with her as I do with you; but as for falling in love, he ain't such a muff."

"But Aunt Nancy is clever, and quite like a man," I argued.

"She's a muff, all the same. I wonder whether she'll leave you her money, since she's so awfully fond of you. Let me dress up in your clothes and go and see her. She won't admit any man, you see."

Rob drew himself up, and I looked admiringly at him. I loved Rob with all my heart, and considered him a hero, albeit not of the heroic ages.

Rob put his threat into execution, and introduced himself to Aunt Nancy in female attire. He did not confide in me, but I knew it when too late.

Our rectory was a charming old place, a little out of the village. It was embowered in trees and shrubberies, had a bright lawn, a brighter garden, and a tiny pond, surrounded by weeping willows and evergreens. Besides the principal gate that opened into the village road, there was a back gate that led into the glebe, and thence into fields and fields that seemed as endless as the meads and gardens of Paradise. Here my father, dearest and most angelic of men, lived, wrote, prayed, and talked to me, and taught me when he could spare the time. Hence he went to his church and parish, passing my mother's grave every day, and pausing to breathe a sigh or drop a tear over that green holm of her he had loved best on earth. Here I was born and nurtured, and grew up as wild as a hedge-rose. Here I gardened, fished, climbed trees, and wandered about from morning till night, leading a life as fresh and innocent as country life could be. My friends and companions were the villagers and their children, my pleasures as constant and changing as the seasons. Cousin Rob called me an old-fashioned, unconventional mousey, and played me many a trick by way of introducing me into the ways of the world, as he expressed it.

But the worst trick he ever played was the forcing himself into Aunt Nancy's august presence, dressed in as many of my clothes as he could get on.

My father and I were sitting one evening waiting tea for Rob. We were growing impatient, for it was waxing late, and my father liked his tea punctually at eight o'clock. Suddenly we were aroused from our cogitations over Rob's absence, by the sudden appearance of Becky, who entered unceremoniously through the drawing-room window, which opened to the ground and exclaimed :

"Please sir, please miss, missus, wants you instanter. She be in a towering passion, and I don't know no more why than the man in the moon."

"Do go, Minnie," said my father, who, like men in general, disliked women in towering passions.

"You must come, please sir, missus zed zo."

"Do papa, I am afraid," I entreated, "Perhaps aunt has been crossed in love again."

My father laughed, took up his hat, and we all went to Aunt Nancy's, Becky pouring forth what further she had to tell as we walked up the village.

"I was out for water, please zur, I warn't gossiping indeed, miss, if you'll tell missus. When I come in I heerd missus scolding to hurzef in the parlour; and then she com into the passage, and hollored out, 'Becky, you idle slut! go for the rector and miss Minnie, and tell them to come here 'rectly minute.' Then she locked the parlour door, and stamped her voot at me, so I come here in a twinkling."

"You must be patient, Becky," said my father. "If you do your duty with single eye and purpose, you will be rewarded. My sister has her troubles."

"Lor' bless your reverence! so have I. But if you was only to try it for a week now! I haan't got no peace, morning, noon, nor night. Vust thing in the morning ring, ring, ring; and if I bean't out o' bed quick as a vlea, in comes missus hurzef; last thing at night, if I bean't in bed quicker than a vlea, in she comes again."

"I dare say you sleep well, Becky," said my father.

"Lor! iz zur, from the time missus do go out till she do come in again," said Becky.

"Then you have much to be thankful for," said my father, with his quiet smile. "Do you know there are many great ladies who would change estate with you for the sake of such sleep as you describe."

"And missus night and morning?" asked Becky, incredulously.

"Possibly," answered my father, himself doubtful of his position.

When we reached Redbreast Cottage, my aunt's abode, we found her anxiously awaiting us in her little hall.

"There, brother! There, Miss Minnie! Enter at once!" was her greeting, as she pointed to her parlour door.

"What's the matter, sister? You look ruffled," said my father, demurely.

"Matter! Ruffled! Go in and see," gasped Aunt Nancy, unlocking the parlour door, and throwing it open. "What are you glowering at, you idle slut?" she added to Becky, who thereupon hurried into the kitchen.

My father and I went into the parlour, where we found a woman. She was seated at the table, bending over a sheet of paper, apparently writing. I saw with dismay my best jacket, and guessed at once the cause of the disturbance. I knew it must be Rob. I recognised the parlour-maid's Sunday bonnet and the cook's gown, and no longer wondered at Aunt Nancy's disturbed mind and manner.

"It is Rob, father," I whispered, while Aunt Nancy was exorcising Becky.

"Rob!" cried my father.

"Yes, uncle," said Rob, looking up and trying to assume his grandest manner. "Your disinherited nephew has thus disguised himself in order to see his maternal aunt, whose unjust contempt for our sex masculine has hitherto excluded him from her presence. *Veni, vidi, vici!*"

"*Vici!*" screamed Aunt Nancy from the passage.

"Rob," said my father, "this is too bad," and he burst into a genuine laugh, in which I joined.

Who could have helped it? Rob, with a flaxen front of short curls, a brown chignon, a light fabric called a bonnet, and a pair of spectacles, was irresistible.

" You laugh ! " cried Aunt Nancy, as she entered.

My father nearly choked himself in his effort to suppress the offensive cachinnation.

" Pardon, most sublime aunt," began Rob, encouraged by my father's merriment.

But a severe frown on that brow soon checked his heroics. We all feared my father, while we loved him.

" Sister, I am sorry that this silly boy should have vexed you," said my father.

" Sir, he forced himself into my presence. He took me in," said Aunt Nancy.

" That is more than you did me, aunt," said the incorrigible Rob.

" Silence, fool ! " said my aunt. " Minnie, I accuse you of collusion. I renounce you for ever ! "

I did not know what collusion meant, and wondered whether it meant being crossed in love.

" Had you anything to do with this tomfoolery, child ! " said my father, severely.

" No, indeed, papa. Rob knows," I replied.

Rob declared that I was innocent, and my father believed us. Not so Aunt Nancy. She knew my jacket.

" Henceforth I wash my hands of my niece," she said.

" But not of your nephew, aunt," cried Rob, suddenly slipping off his head-gear, and appearing a comely unblushing youth. He was said to be like his mother, Aunt Nancy's dead sister, and she started as she met the frank, good-humoured black eyes. For a moment she seemed moved, then she waved her hand majestically as if to dismiss him. I see her now, as she stood towering over us, her eyes flashing and the crêpe turban waving. She suddenly caught sight of something on the floor.

" What is this ? " she exclaimed, hurrying towards a prostrate band-box, out of which protruded rags of every kind and

colour—silks, satins, calicoes, muslins, pieces of all the garments that Aunt Nancy had worn from her childhood upwards, and with which she was wont to patch her shoes, pocket-handkerchiefs, and the like.

"How dare you, sir? Ungentlemanlike baboon!" shrieked



Aunt Nancy, and therewith swooped down upon her nephew and gave him a box in the ear that might have cracked its tympanum.

"Unladylike she-ape, rather," said Rob, putting himself into a warlike attitude and facing his injured relative.

The blow had roused the blood of giver and receiver, and the flush on Aunt Nancy's gave me to perceive for the first time,

how handsome she must have been, and that Rob was like her.

"Come away, sir," said my father, sternly, putting his hand on Rob's shoulder and grasping my unlucky jacket.

"Don't be angry, aunt," I interceded, reverently touching the green Joseph.

But her blood was roused, and she shook me off.

"Enough of this," said my father, calmly. "It is only a schoolboy's trick, deserving the box in the ear you have administered. Rob will know better some day."

"When he has been crossed in love," said Rob, casting an angry glance at Aunt Nancy.

Another blow was impending, but my father pointed to the door and Rob walked out, dragging his calico skirt after him. I saw a smile on my dear father's face, but it faded before Aunt Nancy's frown.

"Look here," she said, pointing to a piece of paper on which Rob had been writing during his imprisonment. I caught the first lines of an elegant poem, which were as follows :

' My dear Aunt Nancy,  
I well can fancy,  
How young De Squancy,  
Your charms adored—'

the remainder was lost to me, as my father crumpled the paper up and put it in his pocket.

I followed Rob, and found Becky helping him to undress. He was in a great passion, she was condoling.

"Hide the clothes, Becky," I said, "and I will send for them. Come along, Rob."

"I must put 'em in the chimbley, or missus is zure to vind 'em," muttered Becky. "Lor! what a row I shall have. He, he! He took her in, zure enough."

The hatless Rob hurried out of the house, and I followed. The parlour window was thrown open, and out came the bonnet, chignon, and front, left behind in the fray. I stooped to pick them up and carried these trophies after the retreating hero. I do not think Aunt Nancy saw him, or his other honours would not have remained long behind.

"How could you, Rob?" I exclaimed, as soon as I overtook the breathless invader.

But Rob was not penitent. He launched into a sea of epithets that would have drowned a more accustomed hearer than I, and that quite overwhelmed even me. I had been accustomed to consider Aunt Nancy as a grand but victimised woman. Rob reduced her below the level of her sex. I remonstrated in vain. It was some time before I could induce him to tell me that he had borrowed the chignon from our house-maid, who, it appeared, sometimes wore it when my father and I were at church, or at a reliable distance from home, and that she had been in his secret, and had helped him to dress. The bonnet was also hers. I held it before Rob's eyes, a rumpled specimen of limp tulle and crushed flowers. This also I had never seen before, for my father forbade what he called those "offensive top-knots," and in his presence, at least, the servants appeared in sober head-gear, caps with strings and bonnets with crowns.

"You must give her a new one, Rob," I said. "You have been very wrong, and are not sorry."

"I've seen the old beldame, at least," said Rob, recovering his temper; "but I wish I had frightened her to death. She knew me directly, and went out and——"

"Locked you in like a naughty boy," said I.

To Rob's disgust my father treated his escapade as a silly trick, and him as a foolish school-boy. Rob was preparing himself for a lecture, and talking largely of what the governor

would say, when my father came home, and in a slightly contemptuous tone said,

"I thought you were growing into manhood, preparing for the army. A man and a soldier condescending to bully a silly woman. Poor Rob!"

And so, apparently, ended Rob's attempt to see Aunt Nancy. But the consequences fell upon me. He soon went back to his military college ; I remained behind to suffer for his fault.

For a long time Aunt Nancy would see no one, not even my father. Becky bewailed her fate more broadly than ever, and I lamented with her. As I was really fond of Aunt Nancy, and as my pleasures and acquaintances were few, I grieved sincerely at being thus sent to Coventry. In course of time, however, Fate reunited us, or rather curiosity, which may be female fate.

In my father's parish was an old mansion belonging to General Sir George Hamilton. He had been all his life in India, and, consequently, Hatherton Hall had been untenanted, save by two old servants who took care of it. This place was suddenly announced as let. Masons and carpenters were at work, and the whole village was astir. Nothing like it had happened in my memory.

One day I was passing Aunt Nancy's window, and eagerly looking in, when, to my great delight, she appeared at it and beckoned to me.

In my joy I nearly kissed Becky, and fairly jumped on Aunt Nancy's neck, exclaiming, "It was not my fault, and indeed, indeed Rob——"

"No more, no more," said Aunt Nancy, disengaging herself and hastily rubbing her hand across her eyes. "I want to hear about the Hall, Minnie, nothing else I assure you."

I was able to tell her that a rich London merchant had taken the Hall for a term of years, that his name was Wallace, and that he had an only daughter. This was all I knew, and I

remember that I indulged myself in various conjectures concerning our coming neighbours. My aunt, who was a stickler for the aristocracy, seemed to take no further interest in them when she heard they were, as she expressed it, "of the tradeocracy." I noticed a slight twitching of the face when I told her that Sir George Hamilton was reported ill, and I wondered, as I had often done before, whether he had anything to do with the crossing in love.

From this time I resumed my customary visits to Aunt Nancy, and as Rob did not again make his appearance, until as an officer, he came for his farewell visit previously to joining his regiment, which was going to India, no unusual tempest ruffled our mutual relations. Aunt Nancy was cross, caustic, churlish, parsimonious, and solitary as ever; but I thought of that early trouble and attributed it to her being crossed in love.

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## II.

IN due course of time Mr. Wallace and his daughter Matilda Sophia arrived at the Hall. The keenest curiosity was impatiently suffered by all the village, but by none so impatiently as by me. When they appeared at church I am afraid they engrossed more general attention than did my dear father, until, from the pulpit, he gave us a well-understood reproof. He considered, he said, wandering eyes quite as objectionable as itching ears. Had Mr. Wallace and his daughter understood their pastor as well as his other parishioners did they would have been flattered. After the service I had my reprimand, and I have never forgotten it.

"You found a new object of worship, my dear, to-day. I

hope the answer to your prayers may be as effectual to the saving of your soul as that promised by the Old."

So said my father, with his quiet, half-satirical manner. I told him that I could not help it, although I was quite ashamed of myself, and asked him if he did not think the new comers remarkably elegant and handsome. He smiled, and said he had tried not to look much at them, but that he had seen some very smart colours in the great pew.

Aunt Nancy was much more satisfactory. She never went to church, but she had seen them pass her window as they returned.

"*Parvenus*, my dear," she said.

"Oh, aunt! I am sure they are gentlefolks: so well-dressed and good-looking," said I.

"Nothing to do with it. I saw old Betty make her bob to them as they passed, and the condescending smirk she got in return was quite enough. I say they have no business at the Hall;" and a flush and flash lighted up her marked face.

My father and I made their acquaintance the next day. My first impressions were wholly favourable. Mr. Wallace was a fine, gentleman-like looking man, with good manners; his daughter, a fashionable, highly-educated girl of eighteen, who appeared to me the perfection of beauty and taste. I was only a year younger, but I knew that I was a mere child to this young lady. She made herself very pleasant to me—hoped we should be friends—talked of subjects of which I knew nothing—slightly patronised me, as the Hall will *sometimes* patronise the Parsonage—and did her best to draw me out.

At first I perceived that Mr. Wallace's manner to my father was something like his daughter's to me; but it soon yielded beneath the simple ease of my father's rare good-breeding. Mr. and Miss Wallace made many inquiries concerning the neighbours, and seemed anxious for society. I remarked that

they did not affect people who were not either rich or great, but passed over many of our particular friends among the clergy with an interjection, reserving their comments for the squires, baronets, and our one 'Lord.' Miss Wallace asked me if I knew any of the officers quartered in our county town; and, upon my replying in the negative, appeared much surprised.

When my father and I left the Hall, I became voluble enough; but, in return for my expressions of ardent admiration, for our new acquaintances, I could only elicit from my father such phrases as "Wait a bit, Minnie. We must see more of them. Very good-looking, certainly, but what did the young lady drag about after? A train, was it? Oh! they managed those silly appendages better in the old times. Hers reached half across the room, and I was nearly walking over it more than once. Quite a gentleman! Oh! to be sure, and undoubtedly of grand presence. I wonder what Aunt Nancy would think of them?"

My father had a high opinion of Aunt Nancy's discrimination, although he grieved much over her absence from church and other peculiarities.

When I recounted my impressions to her, and minutely described all I had seen and heard, she persisted in using that odious word *parvenus*, and I, in my superior judgment, began to perceive, that all old people ever think the new generation inferior to their own. I hinted as much; and Aunt Nancy laughed scornfully, saying, that gentlefolks were gentlefolks whatever their generation or position—and vulgar people were vulgar people whether rich or poor. However, the Wallaces were not vulgar—of that I was sure; and my father agreed with me.

They soon received visits from all the neighbours, far and near, and the usual number of dinner parties followed. My father accepted invitations to a few of them, but declined them

for me, as he did not consider me old enough for general society, and did not wish me to acquire a taste for it. I was, nevertheless, a great deal at the Hall, and Miss Wallace and I became fast friends. She was good-natured ; and, in return for my devotion and admiration, did her best to make me fashionable, and to root up, as she expressed it, my old-world notions. I was disappointed that I could not inspire her with my love for the country and the beauties of nature. ‘A primrose by a river’s brim,’ was, as Wordsworth hath it, nothing but a primrose to her—and the river called up no sympathy from the depths of her soul. It was water and nothing more. Unlike my dear companion, Rob, she could not wander by the brookside and find music in its murmur—beauty in its banks. Still she was a musician and an artist, such as masters can make out of the material afforded by ambitious school-girls.

By degrees she took me into her confidence. A new light dawned upon the narrow horizon of my experience. I became the recipient of love-stories; of the adventures of what I heard called the age of “fast” girls—and I felt myself, by comparison, very slow indeed. I found that Miss Wallace was able to correspond with more than one young man—several, indeed ; while I found it difficult to write a proper letter, even to my cousin Rob. She had walked, talked, flirted with layman and clergyman, soldier and civilian ; while I had never spoken half-a-dozen consecutive words to any man in my life, save my father, cousin Rob, and the country people. I admired her accordingly. She said she inclined to the military. There was a regiment quartered in the neighbouring town, and she knew most of the officers. She intended to induce her father to call on them and invite them to the Hall.

“ Captain Harcourt is a perfect love ! ” she exclaimed, enthusiastically. “ I am sure you would like him ; and you are just the girl to suit him.”

"Cousin Rob is in the army," I said, in return. "He is coming here before he goes to India. I hope you will like him, Matilda."

Captain Harcourt and Cousin Rob did arrive in the course of time : one at the Hall, the other at the Rectory. I certainly *did* like Captain Harcourt ; and apparently Miss Wallace liked Rob. I found the Captain the most accomplished and agreeable man I had ever seen ; and felt that my cousin, the Lieutenant, could not compete with him in Society, albeit he was so amusing in private life. Miss Wallace made herself very charming to both, as well as to various other gentlemen who came and went at the Hall. I was allowed, by degrees, to go and come when I liked. I owed this privilege to Aunt Nancy, who told my father that I might as well make my apprenticeship to the follies of life early as late, and that she thought I was to be trusted.

I entered upon this apprenticeship very diffidently ; and few girls of the nineteenth century have ever felt so much ashamed of themselves. I could do nothing but blush and make awkward curtseys, and say nothing but "Yes" and "No." Cousin Rob, in all the plenitude of military ease, laughed at me, called me the shyest of country mice, and held up for my example and admiration Miss Wallace. All in vain. I shrunk deeper and deeper into my hole. My father watched over me vigilantly, and occasionally scolded Rob for rallying me.

"Let her alone, Rob," I heard him once say. "She is more to my taste than all your Miss Wallaces."

"I only chaff her a little, sir," said Rob.

"You only *what?*" said my father, who was strangely unacquainted with the slang of the period.

"Chaff her, sir. That means—why that means—" said Rob, puzzled for an explanation.

"I think I understand," said my father, with a malicious

twinkle in his eye. " You call the conversation of this pleasing age, chaff. Assuredly there is not a grain of corn in it. An admirable expression, Minnie; our old friends, the poets, would not understand us."

" *They* had some queer bits of old-fashioned slang, too, sir," said Rob, boldly.

" But they were not chaff, nephew. They would not have reached us if they had been. The wind would have carried them into that out-of-the-way corner where chaos reigns. So, Minnie, be a sensible chicken and stick to the wheat."

I followed my father's advice as well as I could. I did my utmost to glean a little wisdom here and there, and got laughed at for my pains. While Rob devoted himself to Miss Wallace, Captain Harcourt took especial trouble in trying to draw me out. The more difficult the task, the more energetically he stuck to it. I was much obliged to him, for he was such a gentleman that he never made me feel awkward, and kindly covered my confusion when I said or did what I felt to be awkward. But I sadly missed my cousin's old confidence and attention. He had little time for me; he was so much engrossed by Miss Wallace, that he seemed only to have eyes and ears for her.

Aunt Nancy, who knew everything, twitted me with this.

" So, Minnie," she said, " that divine Rob has deserted you. But you needn't suppose Miss Wallace will have anything to say to him. A flashy-dashy girl like that would think scorn of a cub such as he."

" Indeed, aunt, you mistake. She likes him extremely. She thinks him very handsome and pleasant. And so he is, Aunt Nancy. He is not a cub."

" Charming youth! I beg *you* will have nothing to say to him, Minnie. Indeed you have no chance. I should give you up for ever if you set your heart upon him."

"I shall always love Cousin Rob, aunt," I said, boldly ; "and never, never desert him—even if—he—deserts me."

"You remember what you asked me once, Minnie ? Beware that you do not get a practical explanation."

I remembered that my question had been, "What is it to be crossed in love ?"

But I was not in love with Rob—I was quite sure of that. He was not so charming as Captain Harcourt ; and then—I had known him all my life.

Still I narrowly watched his growing devotion to Miss Wallace, and was too proud to let him see that I perceived it. Miss Wallace gave him full encouragement—but then she encouraged all men alike, except, perhaps, Captain Harcourt.

"He is a very nice fellow," she would say to me of Rob.  
"Such a nice fellow!"

One day my father overheard the encomium.

"Is that Rob ?" he said. "I was not aware that he had obtained collegiate distinction. Rob a fellow ? I am quite proud. Rob, how long have you been a fellow ?"

Rob, unluckily, appeared on the scene at this moment.

"Ever since I was born, I suppose, uncle," laughed Rob.  
"Why do you ask ?"

"These young ladies were making a Don of you ; and I, knowing your tastes, was surprised."

"Men no longer exist—we are all fellows now," said Captain Harcourt, attracted by my father's manner. Every one was attracted by that manner, half sarcastic, half playful. "The young ladies even give us brevet rank, and shall we not take it ?"

I saw that Miss Wallace coloured crimson, and I knew that my eyes were cast down.

"I like of all things to be called a 'nice fellow' by a handsome girl," said Rob, glancing at Matilda. "It is so much more jolly than a 'nice young man.'"

Every one laughed ; and my father turned the conversation ; but he did not fail to tell me, privately, that whatever the style of the day might be, to call a man a " nice fellow " was not good style for girls, and that he liked the old style best.

That " merrie month of May " was a pleasant time to us young people, and we were all very nearly losing our heads in our Maying. Poor Rob's was gone—mine was going. Of Captain Harcourt's and Miss Wallace's I was not sure. If I spoke of the Captain to Miss Wallace, her general reply was, " He is very clever and agreeable, of course, but he is very poor. You know that my father will hear of nothing for me short of a title —and with my enormous fortune, I can claim one."

I sighed for Rob.

Captain Harcourt, on his side, did not overstep the common bounds of Society in his intercourse with Miss Wallace, but rather seemed attracted by me. I fancied she was jealous of the preference, but I was so flattered by the polished, thoughtful attention of this accomplished man of the world, that I could not sigh for her.

One day we found ourselves deep in the woodlands. Rob and Matilda in advance—Captain Harcourt and I sauntering behind. Beneath us a world of blue hyacinths sparkling like a sapphire sky—of wood anemones, peeping out like pale stars—of all the many-hued glories of the spring. Above us a chorus of birds singing to one another as birds alone can sing—clear, continuous, joy-bringing carols for the resurrection of Nature after her winter death.

" We are ordered away next week, Miss Minnie," said Captain Harcourt. " I am glad of this unusual chance of finding myself alone with you."

" My father and Mr. Wallace cannot walk so fast," I said.

" Luckily, no. Your father takes good care of you ; and he is right. So shy a violet should not be let to drag her sweet-

ness into common day. Do not be afraid. I am not going to compliment you. You are too good and pure for flattery. I only want to say that if you should ever hear anything of me that might prejudice you against me, do not think hardly of me. We younger sons of good families are sometimes led to take steps that we would rather not take. I have never in my life seen anyone like you ; and I cannot imagine a happier lot than his will be who shall wander through the woodlands of this world with so innocent and sweet a companion. Oh ! if such a lot could be mine ! ”

During this conversation I grew redder and redder—more and more frightened. Captain Harcourt had never said such words to me before, and I did not understand them. I hurried on. He stopped me.

“ You do not care for me ; but you must hear me,” he said.

I certainly did care for him, but I had a notion that I ought not to listen to him. I felt very uncomfortable ; but I suppose I must have looked unusually repellent. There was something in his manner that I did not like.

“ I do not quite know what you mean,” I said, walking on. “ I am sure papa would rather that you spoke of something else.”

I felt the smile that passed over his face, for I dared not look at him.

“ Innocent creature ! I did not know there was in this effete age so simple a child as you,” he said. “ Minnie, I wish, oh ! how I wish, I could ask you to think of me as I am beginning to think of you.”

In my heart of hearts I believe I wished he would so ask me ; but I did not express my wish even by a glance. I was silent.

“ You might say something, child,” he added, in a provoked tone. “ You might at least let me see your face.” I looked at him. I had nothing to be ashamed of, and I did not understand

his ambiguous language. I liked and admired him, but I was not going to tell him so.

"I am very unhappy, Miss Mayland; but you do not share my sorrows," he said.



"I cannot; for I do not know them," I replied.

He did not look particularly miserable, so I reserved my sympathy, and hastened on. He certainly was a very attractive man, and I believed in him.

"Perhaps we shall never meet again after next week," he resumed.

"I shall be very sorry: but I hope you will come back. Mr Wallace is sure to ask you."

"It would be for your sake—if only—"

The sound of my father's voice echoing through the wood arrested the remainder of the sentence.

"Minnie—Minnie, where are you?" was the repeated call.

I answered it as loudly as I could, and again quickened my steps. In a few minutes we overtook Rob and Matilda, and were met, simultaneously, by my father and Mr. Wallace. Both gentlemen looked at us inquisitively, as well they might, for I must have been as red as sunset, and my companion as cross as two sticks. But we were pale and amiable compared to Rob and Matilda. Rob looked redder than I, and Matilda crosser than the Captain. But Matilda soon recovered herself, and began to talk to my father of the church and parish with inimitable tact. I saw, however, the naughty twinkle in my father's eye.

"Minnie, I want you," said cousin Rob, abruptly.

I gladly joined him, and we lingered behind the others, who were soon out of sight.

"By Jove, I must tell somebody, Minnie. I am over head and ears in love with Miss Wallace. I have been telling her so. I have done a foolish thing, and asked her to have me."

"Oh, Rob!" exclaimed I.

I quite hated myself. I felt jealous—jealous of Matilda, who had taken Rob away from me. And yet I had no sentimental feeling for him, as far as I knew. I was even pondering silently over Captain Harcourt's words, and wishing that they had been more clear.

"You may well say 'Oh, Rob!'. I have thrown myself heart and soul at her feet, and she will promise nothing in return. I don't think the girls of the day have any heart at all. She has given me encouragement enough; you must say that."

"She has so many admirers!" said I.

"Hang 'em! They only care for her money, while I would marry her if she hadn't a penny in the world."

"How would you live, Rob? You are not very rich."

"I am not poor. I have my pay, and a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Two people could live on that, and love."

"Poor Rob! Perhaps she will accept you if her father will let her."

"She talked a lot of bosh about her papa—the old humbug, I don't like him—and said he was ambitious, and wouldn't let her marry any one who had not a decided position in the world. I told her our family had been gentlefolks ever since the creation, and that there was no better position than the army. At last I made her cross, and then uncle came whooping through the woods like a great owl."

"For shame, Rob."

"Oh! he is afraid of you and the Captain, Minnie. I would never have believed that you could be such a little flirt."

"I, Cousin Rob?"

"You. Captain Harcourt is nearly as much in love with you as I am with Miss Wallace. And you have no objection, I can see."

"I don't think you have ever looked at me since you have known Matilda. You have been very unkind to me," said I.

"You haven't wanted me, Minnie. Captain Harcourt has been a very efficient substitute," said Rob.

"We are cousins, and have known one another always," I replied. "I don't see why new people should come between us. They don't care for birds and fields and flowers as we do."

"You will help me with Miss Wallace, Minnie. Do you know, I have scarcely slept a wink since I knew her."

I promised to do my best, and Rob and I shook hands, and returned to our own cousinly ways. Still, I was jealous of Matilda Sophia.

My father kept me so well employed during the remainder of the week that I was little at the Hall. Rob, however, continued

to pay his devoirs at his Matilda's shrine. Captain Harcourt was only there once during this period, and my father and I dined at the Hall that day. There was a large party. All was mirth and excitement, and Miss Wallace was unusually brilliant and well dressed. Poor Rob hovered about her like a persistent moth, and half a dozen other men were equally indefatigable. I noticed that she lavished smiles and nonsense on all except Captain Harcourt. To him she seemed almost distant ; but I caught her eyes, as well as my father's whenever he approached me.

His manner to me was particularly gentle and kind, but he did not return to the subject of our conversation in the wood. I heard Miss Wallace say to him, "Is she so very green ?" and I wondered whether this elegant colour was applied to me. I did not catch the answer. She certainly was neither so friendly nor communicative to me since the arrival of the Captain as she had been before.

Aunt Nancy was much interested in all my details of the Hall. She seemed to understand the whole state of affairs much better than I did ; and her significant "Humph ! so indeed ! Like them all !" occurred frequently.

Captain Harcourt called on my father to take leave of him. I was alone in the library when he came, but my father appeared shortly.

" You have a peaceful, happy home, Miss Minnie," he said. " And I like your father almost better than any man I ever knew."

" Do you ?" cried I. He had found the way to my heart now. I adored my father.

" Yes. He manages to be good and pious, yet pleasant and still a gentleman. Then he has so much humour. I wish you knew my friends. They are as nice as yours. I am the scape-goat."

"I am sorry to say good-bye, Captain Harcourt," said my father, as he came in. "It is an ugly word."

Captain Harcourt said he was invited to return, and hoped to do so. My heart bounded joyfully at this intelligence, but my father did not look particularly pleased.

When he was gone, my father said to me—

"My Minnie looks quite melancholy; but she must know that gallant captains are not always to be trusted. This one has certainly been very civil; but she must not break her heart if the gilded oak-apple is somewhat hollow."

He kissed me affectionately, and I ran away to shed one or two tears. I somehow fancied Captain Harcourt had come for a different purpose.

Rob was also to leave in a few days, and that afternoon he confided to me that Miss Wallace was much more responsive than she had ever been, and had promised to correspond with him. He was in frantic spirits. It was his opinion that if Miss Wallace would engage herself to him, and if Captain Harcourt would propose for me, there would be nothing more to wish for. He counted no costs. But

"A change came o'er the spirit of our dream."

The following morning our breakfast-table was invaded by the parlour-maid, who came unsummoned to tell us that there "was news, oh such news!" The twinkle came into my father's eye, as it always did at such announcements, and Rob and I set down our teacups.

There was great confusion at the Hall. Mr. and Miss Wallace had left, the servants were astir before daybreak, and the reports were outrageous. It was said that Miss Wallace had eloped with Captain Harcourt, and that her father had gone after them.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said my father. "Go back to your

pantry, Mary. What gossips you women are." Then, when Mary had departed, he added, glancing at Rob and me, "I should not be surprised if this were true. Pretended indifference is often secret understanding. If they have victimised you two they have been very skilful assassins. Don't let them think you have felt the knife."

Rob turned red and declared he didn't believe it. I turned pale and held my tongue.

"She couldn't bear him, she told me so," said Rob.

"Then she certainly has not eloped with him. Ladies with five thousand a year *in posse*, and twenty thousand pounds *in esse*, don't run away to please other people. Be happy, then, Robert, my boy."

But Robert was not happy. He fretted and fumed, and finally walked off to the Hall. He could glean nothing further. Mr. Wallace had come down stairs before his usual time, ordered his horse, and ridden off. He told the groom that he should probably not return until night. The man said he looked rather glum. As breakfast waited long, the butler inquired for Miss Wallace's maid. She was not to be found. The housemaid was sent to her mistress's room, and there was neither mistress nor maid. Great sensation ensued. One of the men said he had seen Captain Harcourt and Miss Wallace together in the garden the previous evening, and they appeared in earnest conversation ; another that some villagers had heard the wheels of a carriage at daybreak. Nothing further could be discovered.

Rob wandered about furious, and I went to aunt Nancy, who had heard the news from Becky. I was not in a good mood.

"So, Minnie, I told you how it would be ; men are not to be trusted," Aunt Nancy began.

"I don't believe any of it," cried I. "They did not even like one another."

"Insinuating officers and dowered girls are not amenable to Cupid's general laws. I hate the army. Minnie, I should like to shoot that man. Now you know what it is to be 'crossed in love.' You will never recover from it, never."

Aunt Nancy stamped her foot, beat the table, and flashed her eyes upon me. I am ashamed to say I was crying. I did feel slightly awry ; but I looked at Aunt Nancy. Must I take to a green Joseph and crêpe turban, and shut myself up for life ? Must I grow gaunt and grim, parsimonious and dyspeptic, choleric, and ascetic ? Such was the result of disappointment to her, should it be so to me ?

"Minnie, my heart bleeds for you ; come to my arms," said Aunt Nancy, theatrically.

She threw her arms round me. I kissed her and burst out laughing.

"Hysteria," she said, "I know it."

Perhaps it was, but I stifled the sobs and encouraged the laugh.

"No, no, auntie, I am too wise for that," I said. "Thank you for being so kind to me ; I have quite made up my mind, and I am not going to be crossed in love."

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### III.

THE report had been true. Captain Harcourt and Miss Wallace were man and wife. Mr. Wallace returned to the Hall, very uncommunicative. He never spoke of his daughter, and the course of events flowed back into its old channel. Rob went with his regiment to India for five years, and my father, Aunt Nancy, and I returned to our old ways. The temporary excitement over, we all calmed down.

Towards the end of these five years fresh excitement prevailed. Mr. Wallace had had notice to quit the Hall and Sir George Hamilton was expected to return to it. Cousin Rob, who, having seen service, was promoted to the rank of Captain, was also coming back. Sir George Hamilton and Rob had met in India, and appeared to be fast friends.

Aunt Nancy grew more peculiar than ever, and Becky frequently declared her intention of leaving her service. I had by this time discovered that Sir George Hamilton had been the cause of that unfortunate *cross* which had so long excited my curiosity.

In due time Sir George arrived at the Hall on a visit to Mr. Wallace, and to our great surprise Captain and Mrs. Harcourt arrived also. We never learnt how the reconciliation with Mr. Wallace was brought about, but they came with three children, nurses and other servants, as if they intended to remain for some time.

My father said he would call on Sir George Hamilton. Aunt Nancy gave him to understand that if he did so she could never forgive him; but he said that thirty years were quite long enough to forget and forgive an old love affair, and that he, at least, bore no malice. I was not so sure that five years was time enough, and I trembled when my father told me to come with him. I had not forgotten Captain Harcourt's conversation with me in the wood, and scarcely knew how to greet a man who had been so deceitful.

The difficulty did not occur. Captain and Mrs. Harcourt were out. We found Sir George and Mr. Wallace, however, and there was no awkwardness with them. Sir George greeted my father warmly as an old friend, and had evidently quite forgotten, or wished to ignore, all his former shortcomings.

He was an elderly man in wretched health, nearly doubled up by rheumatism, and wholly yellowed by climate. Aunt

Nancy was young and blooming by comparison. Could any woman have been "crossed in love" for such a miserable-looking man? was my first thought; my second, that he was a gentleman and had very good manners.

"Is this your daughter?—what a rosebud," was his complimentary address to me. "No wonder my friend, your nephew, speaks so enthusiastically of his cousin Minnie. A fine fellow that, rector. He is as brave as he is open-hearted. I have just been telling Captain and Mrs. Harcourt so. He is going to be my heir, so people say."

My father said that Rob was coming to us in a few days, and that he hoped we should all meet at the rectory. To my great terror he settled a dinner-party for the following week, leaving an invitation for Captain and Mrs. Harcourt.

I found Aunt Nancy as flustered as a school-girl. She did not name Sir George Hamilton, and as I was still supposed to be ignorant of his early engagement to her, I spoke of him at once. I made the very best of his age, complexion, rheumatism, and general ill-health, adding that I thought him the most ill-tempered looking man I ever saw. She was taken off her guard, and declared he had been one of the handsomest men in England. But my description of him had done her good; it had already blunted the edge of her romance.

While we were talking Aunt Nancy suddenly exclaimed, "Who is that? It looks like old Jim Shenstone dressed in smart clothes."

Jim was a poor old cripple, a pensioner of my father's, who, like Sir George, was bent double by rheumatism.

Aunt Nancy went to her observatory. This was a rent in her very old red curtain, through which she watched the passers-by, without being perceived by them.

"I zaw Miss Nancy's oye," the villagers would sometimes say, or "I zaw the tip o' her noaze."

After she had sufficiently examined "old Jim in smart clothes," I said quietly,

"That is Sir George Hamilton, aunt."

"That!" she shrieked, and fell back into an arm-chair which was fortunately behind her.

I had not calculated on the effect of my words. Aunt Nancy put her hand on her heart, turned livid and gasped for breath. I gave her some water, fluttered about her as one does when people are faint, did everything I ought not to have done. She waved me away and recovered herself.

"Go—no—stop," she said. "Lady Hamilton was ugly as sin, but rich as Plutus. They must have been a goodly couple."

She got up and staggered towards an old mirror.



"I am good-looking still. Tell your father I will dine with him the day of his party. I am tired of this life. Go ; don't stare as if you saw a ghost."

I went and gave Aunt Nancy's message to my father, who laughed and said she would not come.

But she was quite serious and I found her the following day, preparing for the unusual event. The time-honoured band-boxes that had been the desire of my life were scattered, open, around her, and from their musty interiors rolled flowers, feathers, ribbons, and gloves of every shape and colour. I say colour unadvisedly, for colour there was none. What had once been pink, blue, or yellow, had faded to dusky browns and greys ; the silks were limp, the kid was shrivelled. Rusty keys were hanging in long-closed drawers, from which protruded poplins and satins, brocades and laces. I could only take a hasty glance at these things, for scarcely had I entered the bedroom, unsummoned, as was my custom, before Aunt Nancy hurried me down stairs. She was much flurried, and could scarcely pay attention, at first, to a message I bore from my father. It was to the effect that he was delighted to hear of her intention of dining at the rectory, and hoped she would let bygones be bygones.

"Tell him that I come," said Aunt Nancy, majestically.

"They will all be there," I blurted out.

"All ; who ? I have dined with dukes in my day, and found all men alike—hollow fools !"

"I have heard you were one of the best-dressed women in the county, aunt. What shall you wear at the rectory ?"

I said this in trembling.

"Wear ! A gown, petticoat, corset, stockings——"

"I didn't mean that, aunt, but——"

"Perhaps you object to my present dress," she interrupted ; "and properly. It is not a dinner dress. I will change it ;

and come attired for your Sir Georges, and Captains, and Robs, and mushrooms of Wallaces. You do not seem grateful for the honour I intend you."

She said this ironically.

"Oh, auntie, I am so glad you are coming; I hope you will do so constantly. You know how happy it will make papa and me."

"Such being the case, you need take no further trouble. Dinner at seven, I suppose?"

"Shall we send for you, aunt?"

"No. I can walk."

"But, Aunt Nancy, you are so unaccustomed to—to—society—and the dress of the present day—that perhaps—you will let me help you—" I stammered.

"I have not forgotten my manners, Miss Pertbox. I should not consider *you* the pink of fashion."

I blushed. It was only that morning that I had been consulting with our village dressmaker as to the remodelling of my white muslin, and listening to a description of Mrs. Harcourt's new dresses, as received direct from her own maid.

I had not the courage to say more; and when I returned home with a rueful countenance to tell my father the result of my visit, I could have cried. He, however, only shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and wondered what would come of it.

My romantic imagination called up all sorts of horrors. The stories which Mrs. Harcourt had told me, retailed from what she called "those enchanting sensational novels," returned to my mind: and I saw Aunt Nancy enter the dining-room, attired in her faded bridal-dress, pistol or dagger in hand, prepared to murder the betrayer of her affections. I resolved to entreat Cousin Rob to take measures to prevent bloodshed.

But when he arrived, the evening before the party, I forgot everything but him. We were so glad to meet! he was so kind

and cheery, and so good-looking, that I could not admire him enough, and I seemed to have my old playfellow back again, in the mirthful young officer of seven-and-twenty. I told him of the impending dinner party, and saw that he coloured at the prospect of meeting Mrs. Harcourt. All he said, however, was, that he wished uncle had not asked them. I could not resist adding a jesting word or two concerning the fair Matilda Sophia. He smiled rather awkwardly, and said he wished he had never seen her. She had been a great flirt, and he hated flirts. He looked keenly at me when he asked if I had seen Captain Harcourt, but was too generous to wound my feelings, as I knew I had wounded his. Men *are* more generous than women on such occasions.

My father was anxious that his party should go off well. He was a little nervous about it ; and I heard him muttering words such as "forgiveness—Christian feeling—lapse of years," and the like, as if he were trying to bring about a reconciliation of which he was not certain.

Seven o'clock came, and my father, Rob, and I were in the drawing-room. I think all our hearts were beating anxiously, mine certainly was. The party from the Hall arrived punctually. Mrs. Harcourt covered our embarrassment, by eagerly rushing up to me and kissing me enthusiastically. Marriage had not made her nervous.

"My dear Minnie, I am so glad to see you again. Isn't it an age since we met ? You are not a day older, and it is really refreshing to meet you. How d'ye do, Captain Mayland ? I am *so* glad to see you. Sir George has been telling us *so* much about you—haven't you, Sir George ?"

She released me to offer her hand to Rob, who was, I perceived, very red, but who shook the hand, and said "How d'ye do, Mrs. Harcourt ?" in a commonplace sort of way. Captain Harcourt's manner was less natural. He looked at me,

just touched my hand, and turned to my father. Sir George gave me a kindly greeting, and called me his little rosebud, which brought Captain Harcourt's too-expressive eyes upon me.

However it was over ; we all had met—but Aunt Nancy had yet to come. I had scarcely time to remark that Mrs. Harcourt was magnificently dressed, and quite as handsome as ever, when I heard a loud and long ring of the door bell. Shortly after Miss Mayland was announced. All eyes were turned to the door. The party from the Hall were mystified. None of them had ever seen Aunt Nancy, save Sir George in his youth, and all expected to see some stranger relative, a guest in the house.

A tall and stately figure entered. To my great relief, she was not dressed in the yellowed white satin and lace that I feared, but in a handsome if antiquated, black velvet. The dress was low, but over the neck, shoulders, and arms, fell a large point-lace shawl, which I shrewdly suspected, and afterwards ascertained, to have been the veil prepared for her marriage. This was slightly coloured by time, but as I understood point-lace could scarcely be yellow enough, I was not distressed. The head-dress was certainly remarkable. It was a high structure of black velvet and white feathers ; something between a turban, a hat, and a bonnet. Down her face fell long black ringlets : that is to say, if grey hairs mingled with the black, the kindly hand of night veiled them. Over her arms she wore long white gloves, which reached nearly to the elbow. These, also, were benevolently aided by candle-light ; the inquisitive day would have denounced them as yellow.

My father and I hurried towards Aunt Nancy, followed by Rob  
“I am truly glad—” began my father.

“Oh, dear auntie,” whispered I.

“Introduce me,” said Aunt Nancy, waving a fan as long as a walking-stick, and fluttering a lace handkerchief.

“How do you do, aunt ? I am so delighted to see you,” said

Rob, taking her hand, shaking it heartily, and finally drawing it under his arm.

He led the stately lady, in spite of a slight resistance, through the room.

"My sister, Miss Mayland," said my father. "Sister, allow me to introduce Mr. Wallace—Captain and Mrs. Harcourt and—and—Sir George Hamilton."

My father's voice faltered a very little.

Aunt Nancy withdrew her arm from Rob's, and swept a



curtesy that she might have performed in a *minuet de la cour*, at the court of Louis Quatorze.

Captain and Mrs. Harcourt smiled involuntarily. Sir George Hamilton started, and drew back. But he soon recovered

himself sufficiently to make a slight advance towards Aunt Nancy, evidently irresolute whether to speak or not. She soon relieved his perplexity. Rising to her full height from her minuet-curtsey, she looked down upon her decrepit old lover, and said in a calm, polite manner.

"Sir George Hamilton ! Is it possible ? Pardon me, you *are* altered. I should not have known you."

Sir George stammered a few inaudible words, and turned to me. I was gazing on Aunt Nancy, and longing, as Rob said afterwards, to clap my hands and cry "Encore !" the acting was so perfect. But her handsome face was very pale, and I noticed a knitting of the black brows, and a perceptible trembling of the long fan.

Dinner was announced at this moment ; and I still see, in imagination, the little procession walk from the drawing to the dining-room. My dear father and Mrs. Harcourt, Mr. Wallace and my stately, beplumed aunt, the two Captains, ready to explode with merriment, the overpowered Sir George and myself.

. At dinner Sir George naturally sat next me at the head of the table, and Mr. Wallace had unwittingly placed Aunt Nancy next Sir George. I had Captain Harcourt on my left.

All that Aunt Nancy said and did is stereotyped on my mind ; of everything else I have a confused recollection. I know that Captain Harcourt paid me many compliments—that Mrs. Harcourt would have attracted Cousin Rob's attention if she could —and that my father and Mr. Wallace made excellent dinners. I know also that every one was constantly casting sly and amused glances at Aunt Nancy.

She appeared quite self-possessed. Her manners were as good as if she had been in society all the years she had been out of it. She slightly patronised Mr. Wallace, and wholly invalidated Sir George. "Yes," I heard her say, with a toss of her feathers, "your merchant princes, as they call 'em in the papers, reign

over the land. I suppose they will be content when they have bought up the property of all the nobles: but they can't buy the old blood, sir. Cromwell couldn't do that; and all the radicals under heaven never will. Money is all very well to buy new plate, new armorial bearings, new fashions, but it won't buy family, sir: it won't buy family! Cayenne pepper, Sir George Hamilton—curry—ah! you old Indians, you ruin your digestions. I never take stimulants, and I never ailed a day in my life. Frightful climate is India. Men leave England hale and young, and come back so old that their nearest relations cannot recognise them."

"Not quite so bad as that, madam," said Sir George, trying to draw himself up, and wincing under the lash that was inflicted with apparent unconcern.

"India is not such a bad country as all that, aunt," said Rob, across the table; "particularly for the ladies. They do nothing and yet have the best of it."

"Better do nothing at home, sir; better sweep one's floor and dust one's rooms than get yellowed and shrivelled up in a country that doesn't of right belong to us."

I remembered that I used to think Aunt Nancy rather "yellowed and shrivelled," but at that moment she looked so handsome, and had such a becoming flush on her face, and such naughty brilliancy in her eyes, that she was a young girl as compared with Sir George. He, however, made the best of his situation by saying, in a low voice,

"We cannot always be young, Miss Mayland, and we must all pay the penalty of position and action."

Aunt Nancy's lip quivered, but she turned to Mr. Wallace with head erect and feathers nodding, to reply to some remark of his.

"Certainly, sir: but in return for the wealth of India we give her our best blood: and my creed is that blood is richer than riches."

Poor Sir George had married for money. Aunt Nancy had little but her beauty and her family pride. Captain Harcourt asked me if my aunt had not been long a recluse, and wondered how she had preserved her looks and manners, adding something about those possessions being in our family. I began slightly to dislike Captain Harcourt, and I thought his manner to his wife not always pleasant.

When dinner was over, and we three ladies were alone, Mrs. Harcourt monopolized the conversation. She rattled on as if afraid of a pause, and when we had listened long to accounts of fashionable parties and domestic servants, my aunt found an opportunity of whispering to me the terrible word "Mushrooms!"

When the gentlemen came in Sir George kept at a respectful distance from Aunt Nancy. He scarcely spoke, but was not inattentive to what passed around him. Cousin Rob tried to amuse him, but, as he said afterwards, "The old general had Aunt Nancy on his mind, and how could he rouse from such a nightmare?"

Aunt Nancy, on the contrary, was magnificently courteous, and conducted herself *en reine*, to my father's great amusement. She mightily avenged all family slights; and she, Rob, and I triumphed.

When our guests took their leave she made another stately curtsey to Sir George and the other gentlemen, and allowed Mrs. Harcourt to touch the tips of her fingers. I remarked that Captain Harcourt was infinitely amused, while Mr. Wallace looked annoyed. My father escorted Mrs. Harcourt to her carriage while Rob devoted himself to Aunt Nancy, and the Captain lingered to say good-night to me. It seemed strange by-play.

When they were gone, Aunt Nancy said—

"Poor Sir George! he looks a hundred. Wrinkled, bent, querulous, no digestion, no conversation! Poor Sir George!"

"I shall go home with you, aunt," said Rob, as Becky appeared at the hall door.

She made a show of resistance, and Rob conquered.

"What a woman! What will come next!" said my father, as they left the house.

"Oh, papa! I am so thankful it is over!" was my cry of relief.

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#### IV.

THE next day Rob and I went to inquire for Aunt Nancy. We were told she was ill, and could see no one. In the afternoon I went alone, and received a positive denial. My father went, with the same result.

"Hur bean't hurzelf no-ways," said Becky. "Hur be quiet as a lamb. Hur do zit and think, and think, like a hedgehog, and won't let nobody come a-near o' her."

This state continued for some days. I grew uneasy, but my father believed it would come all right. Rob was for storming her citadel, but this my father decidedly opposed. Meanwhile Cousin Rob and I explored all our old haunts, visited all our old friends, and were almost play-fellows again.

We saw the Harcourts occasionally. They were not happy; and love, if there ever had been any, was fast disappearing from the Captain's breast. My father said that all runaway matches ended badly. Sir George left the Hall a few days after our dinner-party, not intending to return until Mr. Wallace had finally quitted it. When he called to take leave he inquired for Aunt Nancy, and I thought, looked rather pleased when he heard she was not well.

After his departure I was again admitted to Aunt Nancy's

sanctuary. The green Joseph was discarded, and replaced by a rusty black of antiquated make and uncertain matter. The black crêpe no longer adorned her head. Her hair was curled in front and twisted behind. As bands and bags of hair were then in fashion, this looked peculiar.

"I have made up my mind to come into the world again," said Aunt Nancy. "How do I look?"

"I am so glad!" I exclaimed, and evaded the rest of the question by a warm embrace.

"I see people get so old, ugly, irritable, decrepit even, by marriage and society, that I wish to show what spinsterhood and seclusion can do. How did I look the other night?"

"Wonderfully well, aunt. We all thought so."

"Younger than Sir George, I hope?"

"Years, aunt."

"I should think so, indeed. Now, Minnie, you must help me to dust my drawing-room."

My drawing-room! That haunted chamber which no servant had ever ventured to pass after daylight without a candle. Was I to enter it? I trembled with expectation.

Aunt Nancy took a key from her pocket—unlocked a bureau as old as her grandfather—unlocked therein a drawer—took out a secret spring which enclosed another drawer, and took out a large key. She then proceeded to open the said drawing-room, into which I followed her with my heart jumping in a very unnecessary manner. The room was on the second floor, and looked out upon a garden and shrubbery at the back of the house. Two blinds, yellowed by age, and blackened by dirt and cobwebs, nearly excluded the light.

"Draw them up, Minnie," said Aunt Nancy.

In doing this dozens of luckless spiders fell upon me. I repressed a scream, for I did dislike spiders. The windows were dirtier than the blinds. I could not see through them.

The atmosphere of the room was heavy and damp. I asked if I might open the windows, and received consent. I tried in vain. Aunt Nancy came to help, and with our united efforts we forced up a sash ; but crack went both the ropes, and down fell the window again, shattering a pane. A scream from Becky was heard in the passage.

Aunt Nancy put her head out of the door and shrieked, “Hold your tongue, fool ! I have broken a pane of glass.”

Becky was silent, and I heard her creep out to see what window it might be. I found a musty book with which I ventured to support the sash. Then I looked about me. I saw what had once been a handsomely furnished drawing-room. The curtains, formerly blue, were dusty, grey, faded, and moth-eaten ; the carpet had no perceptible colour ; the chairs and couches, which had been of tapestry-work, had neither patterns nor shades ; and the chimney-glass and pictures were invisible. Cobwebs, dust, spiders, and moths, abounded. The room was crowded with ornaments—tables, sofas, chairs, even, were covered. I guessed that these must have been wedding presents. There were glass, china, plate, *bijouterie* in abundance. There were well-bound books, and carved book-stands ; and as to the display of what had once been fancy-work, it was endless —embroidered aprons, collars and cuffs, footstools, ottomans and cushions in wool-work, or, to speak correctly, there was what the moths had left of them.

Aunt Nancy stood for a moment, pale and grim, to contemplate all this.

“How many friends you must have had !” I said.

“I had,” she replied emphatically. “Ask for the dust-pan, sweeping-brushes, dusters, and bellows ; but don’t let Becky come near us.”

I found Becky in the garden, gazing open-mouthed at the phenomena of the up-drawn blinds.

"Hur be a-took for death, miss, hur be. Hur haan't a-boxed my ears once since the dinner-party, and hur give me a whole pudden to-day," said Becky.

As soon as I returned to Aunt Nancy with the desired articles, she began to sweep vigorously, and we were soon enveloped in a cloud of dust. It was some time before we could clearly see one another or the objects around us. Rob came and went, and was greeted by the dazed Becky with entreaties to come in and listen to the noise we were making in that ghost-chamber upstairs.

At last we succeeded in restoring some degree of cleanliness to the room. We were very dirty ourselves, but that was of small account compared with the delight of reopening this long-closed apartment. I cannot think what became of the spiders. Hundreds must have been emptied from the dust-pan into the garden below; numbers must have been killed or mutilated, for despite my anxious efforts, Aunt Nancy would not spare them.

"What do you think of this?" said Aunt Nancy, suddenly opening a case which contained a miniature of a handsome young man in regimentals.

I expressed my admiration.

"Do you know him?" she asked, with a furious toss of the head.

"No," I replied.

"I should think not. I am going to return it to the original, and ask if he knows himself."

It was dusk when we finished our work; and I ran home through the garden and fields to our house, where I was obliged, in domestic parlance, to "clean myself" before seeing my father and Rob. I shall never forget my father's look of solemn thankfulness when I told him what Aunt Nancy had done.

"All will be well again now, please God," he said.

And in due time all was right. Aunt Nancy told my father

that she had been a young fool and a middle-aged fool, but she was not going to be an old fool. She said he must overlook the past, and make the best of her as she was, and faithfully promise not to preach either to her or at her. This compact made, Aunt Nancy quietly returned to the path of everyday life.

I have not much more to tell. Before the year was out Mr. Wallace left the Hall. Captain and Mrs. Harcourt took a place in our county and became very popular people ; but they were not happy together. I saw them now and then, and found this out of my own observation.

Sir George Hamilton returned to his house and property, and set up a good establishment. His *cuisine* was considered unequalled, and his cook said she had a hard task to please him. He and Aunt Nancy met frequently, and she maintained her distant, patronizing manner for some time.

But an event happened which softened Aunt Nancy. Rob and I found out by degrees that we were more to one another than cousins, friends, or playfellows, and we agreed to be man and wife. My father gave his consent gladly, having only the objection that we were cousins. Aunt Nancy demurred, and feared that Rob, as a soldier, might desert at the last ; but she was compelled to give way to Rob's straightforward protestations. Sir George made his will, and openly declared Rob his heir. He had no near relations, and could do what he pleased with his property. I think he considered this a restitution for the harm he had done our aunt. She made it a particular request that I would take to myself, as her wedding present, the contents of that wonderful drawing-room. She said she should be happier when they were no longer hers ; and as she meant to live with my father, she should sell her furniture, and give her house to Rob and me.

I was doubtful how this arrangement might turn out ; but my father said she should have her way, and that she would be

good to him when his little Minnie was gone. Dearest father ! There were tears in his eyes when he spoke.

So Rob and I were married. We had a large wedding breakfast, and of course Aunt Nancy and Sir George were present. She had ordered a full costume from my London milliner, and certainly it became her well. She was the handsomest and most distinguished looking woman of the party. Many old friends greeted her as a resurrection, and Sir George sighed as he looked at her.

I understood afterwards that the sigh was actually followed by a proposal of marriage, and that Aunt Nancy was mollified. She could afford to be so, for she triumphed and had her revenge. She had the satisfaction of refusing Sir George. When Rob and I went to visit my father during Rob's first "leave," we found them on the most amicable footing.

"*You might have been at the Hall, aunt,*" I once ventured to say.

"I preferred being the housekeeper of my brother—a good, clever, healthy, handsome man—to being the nurse of a deceitful, dull, decrepit hypochondriac ; so I sent Sir George that miniatu-re, and told him to look in the glass."

She laughed heartily. In her case the remedy was *better* than the disease, and, as Becky said—Becky had found a berth at the Rectory—"Lor ! miss, hur bean't crossed in love no more than you nor me."

My dear father and Aunt Nancy are very happy together. She goes to church, visits the poor, and keeps a sharp look-out on the servants. I am afraid my reign was milder than hers ; but the old domestics love their master too well to resent the firm rule of their new mistress. Rob talks of selling out and settling at Redbreast Cottage ; but I think he loves his pro-fession too well. Sooner or later we are to inherit the Hall, and then he must leave the army ; but when this subject crops

up, we always end it by saying, "Long live Sir George!" So say my father and Aunt Nancy. They look well after him. Aunt Nancy, in the fulness of resumed life and spirits, prescribes for his body, and my father mildly attempts the cure of his soul. Poor Sir George penitently submits. He and my father make occasional complaints to Rob and me of Aunt Nancy. She is too peremptory, or too satirical, or too high and mighty; but Aunt Nancy declares that you must manage men with a high hand, and she will never again be subject to the caprices of the sex—Never!



## OUT OF THE SEASON.

BY RICHARD JEFFERIES.

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“**T**HREE is nothing so contemptible as a weak man,” said Mrs. Delamere to her grandniece. “Your father is a weak man, Charlotte. Why isn’t he a bishop, or *something*? Why aren’t you settled? Why is your father always coming to me for money? Because he is weak, and *you*—”

There was unutterable scorn in the inflection of the old lady’s voice.

“Isn’t this a twice-told tale, aunt?” replied Charlotte, in a wearied tone that had become habitual to her.

“He wants to go to town this season—for what? To pore over old trash in the libraries all day, and dawdle at his club in the evening. And as for *you*, how much do you suppose your three seasons cost me, Miss Delamere? There was the carriage and your lady’s-maid (you haven’t got one now, have you?) and your dresses—goodness, why two thousand would not cover it!—and here you are still—Mariana in the Moated Grange, seven-and-twenty if you’re a day. You’ll not go to town with *my* money!”

“I do not particularly desire to.”

“No; I know it. It’s that which irritates me. There’s no spirit in you. You look as white as milk. That lazy Brian is at the Court again—dawdling—I do hate dawdlers.” And out she swept.

Though use had made Charlotte calm and indifferent under these oft-repeated jeers, she would have been less than a woman if the recollection of three unsuccessful seasons had not been a little bitter. Had she not been "fast" enough, or was it simply her lack of dowry?

The Rev. Lord Talbot Delamere, her father, was indeed brother to a peer; but as eight healthy children intervened between him and the estate there was no prospect of an improvement in the weak man's fortune. Charlotte had seen less handsome women than herself marry with *éclat*. Her mind was perhaps a little *too* well stored for social success.

"Lazy Brian," a clerk in a well-known Crown office, lifted his hat negligently to aunt Delamere as she drove past, while he leant over a gate with his friend Mr. Martin, tenant of the Court Farm. He had run down for a few days at Easter, as he said, "to give the dogs an airing;" two setters and a spaniel were playing about at their feet.

"You seem rather dull, Martin," said Brian, offering his cigar-case.

They were examples of two most opposite types of men: one tall, swarthy, and obviously weary; the farmer short, stouter, and, though very little older in years, showing his age more.

"I am," he replied. "I am dull. I have something on my mind. Come home. Will you write a letter for me?"

"Of course," said Brian, smiling.

But he did not smile when he found what the farmer, with the strange disinclination to use pen and ink often characteristic of his class, wished him to write. It was an offer of his hand to Charlotte Delamere.

"I know I'm beneath her," said Martin; "but, you see, she has had three seasons, and is not—well, not quite so young now; and—and—well, I love her, and I have money."

The letter was written.

Neither did Charlotte smile when she read it.

"How strange it should be in *his* handwriting!" she thought.  
"Poor Martin! he is a gentleman in heart and manner, though not by descent. I am sorry for him."

She wrote, and broke her refusal as gently as possible. Martin was not satisfied. He begged Brian to obtain an interview for him, knowing that he was on visiting-terms at the Rectory.

With some reluctance Brian went. Strange that he could not look Charlotte in the face while he delivered his message; strange that his voice should falter a little.

"I will meet him at four o'clock," she said, "in the lane by the copse."

The east wind blew cold and keen; but the sky was clear and blue, and the sun, though low, was bright. Between the hedgerows of the lanes it was warmer. She gathered a few anemones: they withered quickly in her hands.

"Like all I have to do with," she thought bitterly.

Martin met her. His tone, at first respectful, soon grew earnest.

"It is in vain," said Charlotte. "I think highly of you; but I do not love you, and I cannot marry you. It is not pride, believe me."

Then he desisted, lifted his hat, and left her. In the Hall the Rev. Talbot met her, his face glowing, and beckoned her to his study.

"Who do you think has come?" said he. "Why, Andrew Wilkins! He was my fag forty years ago. It doesn't interest you? O, indeed! Do you know that he has made half a million, miss? Do you know that he has asked my permission to—to—address you? He has money; we have blood. You will dress up to the mark to-night, and be more cheerful. You





"SHE WALKED ABOUT THE FIELDS AND LANES, FEELING HERSELF  
A LIVING LIE."

have been out with that penniless Brian. Take care you do not get entangled with him."

"I refused him eight years ago," said Charlotte

"It is well. Now dress ; I'll send Rose up to you."

Rose was the dairymaid—for they kept two Alderney cows on the glebe—a bright-sparkling girl, who sometimes acted as Charlotte's lady's-maid. Charlotte had had a Frenchwoman to assist her toilet for those three seasons in town ; being a failure, this humble assistance was considered good enough for her. But Rose was willing, handy, and affectionate.

Charlotte found Mr. Wilkins polished and smooth. He did not press himself upon her; she was grateful to him for that. But the Rev. Talbot and Aunt Delamere never left her a moment's peace. They worried her to show off her accomplishments.

"Do try and be lively," said her aunt. "Don't be a doll. Can't you see that you have the finest chance in the world ? Why, he is sixty-two, has heart disease, and next year is his grand climacteric ! Half a million ! What diamonds !" This tune was played till her life became a burden.

At last she gave a nominal consent, but no time was fixed.

"Early next season," said aunt decisively. "Everything can be got ready by then. There may be something in you, Charlotte, after all. Give me a kiss."

This nominal or half-expressed consent gave her a respite ; Wilkins left. It was a long miserable summer. Her heart was a dull aching void ; she walked about the fields and lanes feeling herself a living lie. Towards autumn, Brian was at the Court again. Must the truth be told ? A guilty thrill of pleasure ran through her. He had not called yet. One morning Rose asked to see her mistress in private. With many blushes she stammered out the truth : she was to be married to the head-carter at the Court, and the pair were to accompany Mr. Brian to Natal.

"To Natal!" said Charlotte, with a sinking feeling at her heart.

"Yes, ma'am. They say he be tired o' Lunnun, and have left his place."

"I shall be utterly alone," thought Charlotte. "Perhaps it will be best for us both. I have sacrificed everything to Society, and now—"

She broke down in private. But when Brian called she was calm enough. On his side he endeavoured to hide his embarrassment by an affected volubility.

"I must congratulate you," he said. "You will have a splendid settlement—you will be envied. At all events I shall have good shooting in Africa. I was weary to death of doing nothing in town—no prospect, no hope. It is better to be a man, even if one does lose a position. My hands are as soft as a girl's now; in a few months they will harden. I have 1500*l.* of my own—Martin lends me another 1500*l.* A long sea-voyage! Yes, it is. I must apologise for taking your Rose; but with my inexperience, without that honest couple," etc.

It somehow happened that pending Brian's departure, which was to take place in October, Charlotte and he were much together in the fields. Perhaps it was the feeling that it was quite safe now one was going thousands of miles away, and the other to be married. They lingered in the lanes and among the barley, till at last poor Martin, who saw this, grew jealous. A suspicion forced itself upon him that he had been "sold"; that in trusting his secret to Brian he had been betrayed. In his anger he went straight to the Rev. Talbot, and bluntly said something, which resulted in that gentleman strictly ordering Charlotte to see Brian no more. Weak and at the same time selfish to the last degree, he fixed all his hopes of future personal gratification upon the consummation of the match

with Mr. Wilkins. He rudely repulsed Brian from the Rectory, and kept watch himself over Charlotte.

Mr. Martin had no sooner succeeded in this underhand proceeding than his naturally honest and generous nature revolted, and his disturbed state of mind showed itself in peevish irritation, till Brian at length insisted upon an explanation, and had it.

"Martin," said he, "you have grievously wronged me. I did your message faithfully. It is true I loved Charlotte enough at one time to propose to her; but she had the sense to see that my income was incompetent to maintain a suitable establishment, and since then—well, since then we have met as friends only, and shall soon meet no more."

"Do you mean to say that that was the only reason you did not marry?"

"And sufficient reason. A poor fellow like me has no right to have feelings. They are a luxury reserved for the rich. But is it well between us? That is better: let us talk of Africa."

Martin, however, was not so easily put aside. He understood now that Charlotte and Brian were in truth devoted to each other, but controlled their affection.

"It is absurd," he thought; "more, it is unnatural and wrong. As I cannot have her, he shall, if it can be managed. Why should she not go with him to Natal? In Africa they need not mind being out of the season."

He argued with Brian; persuaded him to make another effort. At the same time Rose the milkmaid, whose time of service expired at the Rectory in a week, with true feminine love of intrigue, was painting, in colours as bold as she dared, the misery of Mr. Brian, who was going thousands of miles away from the only one he loved, and was so restless and unhappy.

"He walks about the garden half the night," she said ; "and always where he can see your window—no offence, ma'am ; please, don't be angry with me."

Charlotte sighed. The prospect of splendid diamonds did not excite her as it ought to have done ; the thought of Brian's departure did. Her mind wandered across the sea. "There," she thought, "there is room enough, and none of these miserable restrictions that tie us down and make us slaves of society."

Rose was to be married on the Wednesday before the ship sailed ; she asked her mistress to come to her mother's cottage and see "her things." To this the Rev. Talbot, who watched Charlotte like a cat, could make no objection. But Brian had been invited there also. Rose left them alone. When she returned, there were tears on her mistress's face, but Brian held her hand, and his voice had a proud joyous ring in it, as he asked Rose if she could keep a secret.

The mist of the October morning still lingered, when Mr. Martin's dog-trap came gently, drawn by his favourite mare, along the lane by the Rectory grounds. A lady, muffled in an Ulster, stepped quickly out from the arched doorway in the wall, and mounted by his side. A mile was driven without a word : then from a stile came forward a taller figure carrying a gun-case and a trunk. He mounted behind. Little was said ; but how that mare was driven ! Nineteen miles were covered in an hour and a half—it was exactly a quarter to twelve as they reached St. George's Church in Mickleham town. Rose was there and her swain : it was a double wedding. Mr. Martin gave Charlotte away. After three seasons married at last, without bridesmaids or carriage, a breakfast in haste, and to her first love ! At one o'clock the happy couples were speeding away by express for Southampton. Next day the steamer bore them southwards.



IAN HELD HER HAND, AND HIS VOICE HAD A PROUD JOYOUS  
RING IN IT."



Two years have gone by. Farmer Martin stands among his barley, and reads a long letter from Natal, speaking of health, of happiness, of children, of a renewed youth and widening hopes. "In short," finishes Brian, "now I am a man, whereas I was a child. Charlotte is very happy, and sends her love to you."

"Ay, ay," thought Martin, glancing wistfully southwards. "The crops are not now what they used to be; the wheat was yellow this spring, and thin in the ear afterwards. The land is exhausted; but there's room yonder, there's room yonder. Charlotte was wasted here—there she fulfils the noblest mission of a woman on earth. How many hundreds are there who would be equally happy if they could persuade themselves to do likewise! I cannot stand it here alone."

He has given notice to quit. By next season he will be dancing Charlotte's boy upon his knee. Little they reck that they are out of the season: and as wealth gradually flows in upon them, they can, if they wish, return for a while; but not for long: the air there is purer, the life nobler, than in London drawing-rooms.



## RECONCILIATIONS.

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### I.

D'ARCY, of Christchurch, asked me to come down and spend a month of the Long Vacation at his father's.

I wonder what made D'Arcy and me get on so well together. He was a tall, monastic-looking fellow ; spent a good deal of time in an arm-chair at the "Union," reading ; smoked much, and talked little ; went in heavily for buying books with vellum bindings ; was reputed to have turned one of his rooms into an oratory, and was known to have subscribed in a princely fashion towards a reredos. As for myself, I don't think that I had any other talent beyond a very decided one for amusing myself. Oxford taught me, as the ancient Persians taught their children, to ride, to shoot, and to speak the truth : unless, indeed, to dons and ticks—who are one's natural enemies—and pretty girls, who take kindly to perjuries. To these accomplishments I added the art of concocting sherry-cobblers, in the summer term, and all kinds of mulled drinks for the winter evenings.

I don't know that Oxford taught me much else, although D'Arcy used to insist that Oxford could teach a good deal ; and he certainly managed to get a double-first out of her teaching. I think he liked me on the antipathetic principle. My *persiflage* contrasted so much with his sober earnestness. I did not mind if he talked "shop," and I listened if he lectured. I

was associated with him in hall and lecture; and our rooms were on the same staircase; and this led to the invitation.

So, one September afternoon, I found myself at the Burlington Road station. My friend was in a dogcart with a pair of greys. To my great satisfaction, he turned them in a contrary direction to cotton-spinning Burlington. We had nine miles to do through a perfectly sylvan country and at times even a wild country. We passed through a solitary village and by a few scattered farm-holdings. Then, through the lengthening vista of avenue, I saw the grey turrets of Dunster Hall. D'Arcy's father was one of our great estated squires, whose family might have been ennobled again and again, if they had cared for such a distinction, and his mother, Lady Eleanor, had been a wit and beauty in her time, and as she grew older, she proved a beautiful old lady, with her wit, tempered by excessive kindness, as lambent as ever.

I soon found that the house was more like an hotel than anything else. Visitors flowed into it, and visitors flowed out of it. It was just the same with D'Arcy as if he had been at Christchurch. A chat, a drive, a lounge, a walk—and the rest of the day he was with his books and papers. Before I had time to be dull, however, a special form of amusement developed itself.

"The country is pretty enough and truly rural, Lady Eleanor," I said; "but there is nothing very distinctive about the scenery."

"You must go and visit the Glen, Mr. Adair. I will drive you over to-morrow, as far as I can. But do you care for fishing?"

"I like it very much, Lady Eleanor."

"I ought to have told you about that, Frank," said D'Arcy. "Of course you might get capital fishing in the Nydd river. It flows through a sort of gorge, which is the prettiest bit of

scenery which we have in this part of the country, and where the gorge widens is what we call the Glen."

"And when you are there," said one of her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, who happened to be staying in the house, "you ought to go and see Lady Eleanor's model school. Ah, Lady Eleanor, you ought to put that school under government inspection. That clever, pretty governess of yours would give famous results.'

"She is a great deal too pretty and too good to be teased by an Inspector of Schools," said Lady Eleanor. "There was a poor woman who committed suicide the other day because she was told that her school was to be inspected."

"Oh, Miss Lane has a great deal too much sense for that. If Mr. Adair goes to fish in the Glen, he ought certainly to see the Glen school."

Mr. Adair had already amply made up his mind, not so much for the Glen, the fishing, or the school, as to see the pretty schoolmistress.

The next day was fine, and D'Arcy equipped me fully for fishing, and we started together. So he took me to the Glen. Now had that Glen been known by tourists, the beechen trees would have been carved by names, and seats of wood and stone would have been erected for the wondering admiration of visitors. But it was remote from all roads and rails, and red-covered "Guides" had not made the name familiar. D'Arcy pointed out the place and then went back to his books, leaving me to my own devices. High up, hanging on the side of a hill three-quarters of a mile away, was a village, which, I rightly conjectured, furnished a contingent of scholars to the school. One end of the school formed a residence for the schoolmistress: a portico, that looked almost a bower from the clambering roses that overspread it; the latticed window that, half opened, revealed a piano, some coloured prints, such as are issued by the

illustrated periodicals at special seasons, and some pieces of sacred music.

Thus much I noted, as I passed out of the Glen, and moved towards the schoolroom door. Then I tapped with my stick, and entered. All the children rose up and made obeisances. A tall, graceful girl, dressed in white, with one simple rose in her bosom, flitting, sylph-like, among the children at the farthest end of the room, greeted me with a slight courtesy, which, for its grace, might have done credit to any gathering in the Faubourg St. Germain.



She was only about eighteen; a countenance of so much serenity, child-like beauty and simplicity I had never before seen. I greeted her as I would a duchess. I explained my call by saying that Lady Eleanor D'Arcy had asked me whether I would like to see the school. Miss Lane gave me all the

details with as much fulness and frankness as if I had been her Majesty's Inspector of Schools himself, or the Bishop of the diocese.

"Would you like to read the collect for us, sir? This is the hymn."

She put into my hands "Hymns Ancient and Modern," and a large printed card with a form of prayer for schools. I was completely taken by surprise, and if I had had a minute for reflection, I should have replaced the card in her hand. But that minute was not granted to me. She rapidly seated herself at the harmonium, and in a second all the elder girls had grouped themselves around her. The little choir, evidently trained with great exactness, sang very well, but the clear, sweet voice of the schoolmistress rose above all in the full melody. Then there was a pause: and, with much real diffidence, I discharged my clerky functions. No naughty child that day could have been more discomposed than I felt then. The children now went away processionaly, each bobbing her white head, as she defiled out. Then the room was cleared —left to the maps, and black-boards, and a perfect menagerie of painted animals on the walls with bits of description below them; and the schoolmistress came up to me with smiles and frank brow and her inimitable air of perfect simplicity.

I took advantage of that simplicity at once and put her through her paces, as if she were the tallest girl of Lady Eleanor's establishment. I asked her a set of questions, and she answered with the docility of a good child who had got the conduct prize in the first class.

"You are a very young schoolmistress, Miss Lane."

"Not so very young, sir. I am nearly nineteen. But I was very young—not seventeen—when Lady Eleanor first put me here."

"And how do you like it?"

"I like it very much, sir. Some of the girls don't get on as they ought. But they are very good girls, and no trouble. If we should be certificated, I hope they will work a little more."

"And do you like reading?"

"Very much, sir. I always like to be learning something; and if I had more time I think I should study regularly."

"And do you really live all alone?"

"Yes. And why should I not? At least, the pupil teacher comes early and stays till the end of the afternoon school. Then I am quite alone. But my sitting-room is very pleasant. Will you come and sit down, sir? You must be rather tired after your walk from Dunster."

It was as pretty a room as so pretty a girl could wish to have; in much the result of her own taste; but she explained that Lady Eleanor had furnished it, and had given her some pretty things.

Then I easily succeeded in extracting her little history from her. There was a boys' school at Collington—Collington was the village on the hill, every house of which and every inch of ground belonged to a great duke. Lady Eleanor had built this little school for a few neighbouring tenants on the D'Arcy estates, but the Collington children were free to come; and, despite the distance, they came in some numbers. This was partly to be attributed to the fact that Selina Lane was the only daughter of the only medical practitioner at Collington. He had died, leaving his child unprovided for, as I afterwards found out, and then Lady Eleanor had established her in this little school.

I asked Selina whether she did not think the river gorge exceedingly pretty. "Oh! yes," she said, "immensely so." She had sketched it herself in her own poor way; but there had been one or two good paintings of it, and she had heard of good judges of scenery who came many miles to see the gorge. Had

I noticed the rock that, first seen in the distance, assumed the port of a lion? Had I observed the *Osmunda Regalis*? But I had observed none of these things. Then Selina arose, and put on her hat, and walked by my side along the stream, enthusiastically descanting on the beauty of the scenery. She evidently thought that it was part of the duty of the retainers of the great house to instruct all visitors in the beauty of the gorge and glen.

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## II.

SELINA and I shook hands and parted. I went home, if not in love, still in as fair an imitation of love as can well be conceived. Henceforth I often sought the stream in the gorge. The ostensible object was fishing, and my takings were really not inconsiderable. Occasionally I had company—composed of the visitors who flowed through the Hall in a continuous strain of succession. Somehow I think I took some little pains that they should not pass beyond the wooden gateway, or prosecute any educational inquiries at the schoolroom. D'Arcy never came. He was occupied with his studies, and he was now nourishing an enthusiastic desire to join an expedition of a missionary, scientific, and exploring character in a region which we will call Patagonia. I could not help admiring D'Arcy, his enthusiasm, his earnestness, his genuineness. I now know that it was little indeed of these that I had then, or perhaps ever shall have.

After breakfast I would stroll off from the Hall with my fishing-tackle. I steadily reconnoitred the schoolroom. I could hardly venture to make many visits there. Allowing for the utmost educational ardour, it was hardly necessary that I should note the progress of the little community more than once

a week. But I ventured to bring Miss Lane some books and music, and even some of the ferns that she had pointed out. Once I met her by the river-path, but she never again gave me the opportunity ; twice by the gate ; but I oftener saw her climb the steep hill towards Collington. It seemed as if she had detected my piscatorial tastes, and was steadily avoiding falling into the way of them.

On one occasion there was a large gathering to hear the bishop, and knowing that there would be a great number of people at church to meet that ecclesiastical potentate, I slipped away and managed a two-miles' walk home with Selina. At last I gathered courage, and asked her to walk in the evening, after school, by the stream ; for I felt persuaded, and told her so, that this was her usual walk at this time. But, though she virtually admitted this, she would not walk with me. She had done so once, for hospitality's sake, to show the beauties of the vale. I had quite given up the attempt as hopeless, when one afternoon, on my repeating the request, she said, blushing to the eyelids, "I don't mind walking with you, Mr. Adair."

Before long I succeeded in making her confess how she had yielded to this request ; that at first she had thought it wrong to do so, and then she bethought her how the village girls of Collington would walk on the evenings with young men, and why should not she do so, with whatever delight or wonder might belong to love-making. Why might not I walk with her even as other girls had those to walk with them, although I seemed other and better than all others ? Thus much one evening with stammering and blushes ; and I closed her lips with kisses.

She was only a village school-mistress, but in some sort of way she was a lady.

In my point of view this was an extremely pleasant interlude for the Long Vacation. It was better lines than I had thought

for. I lingered on at Dunster Hall, the occupants of which were well pleased to have me. D'Arcy had passed his last examination, and if I did not care to go back to Oxford, that was nobody's business but my own : D'Arcy knew that I had kept my terms. At last my friend had to go away to visit the proselytizing bishop who had inaugurated a wonderful scheme, a kind of Home Rule, for Patagonians, who should be left undisturbed in Patagonia, but should import a Prime Minister and an Established Episcopal Church from England or America.

Now I had found out on the high road, a few miles from the Glen, a vast lonely hotel. Once it had been a great posting house on the northern road. Scores of coaches passed it daily. There was no other inn for miles on the moors. But things had altered. Two or three railways now intersected this part of the country, and the hotel was utterly deserted, stranded high and dry on the rocks like some hapless bark, save that in the fishing season it might interest some harmless Waltonians or stray tourists. Fortunately it belonged to the great duke, who took his loss with composure—the said loss being doubtless compensated by large gains—and he made it worth the landlord's while to live on there, although the business was gone, until the place should be turned into a sanatorium or lunatic asylum. The rooms were lofty and spacious, and so I took some of them, although the landlord rather resented this interference with that established deadness of trade on which he had begun to pride himself.

Here I really let the time drift by me, as love-in-idleness. I brought a box of books down with me, and, in default of something else to do, I read ten times the amount I should have read at Oxford, and began to understand how D'Arcy might really like reading. But my great occupation in life, my great thought in life, my great pursuit in life was Selina. There was a retired way through a wood a little distance from the hotel

to the Glen, which eluded Collington observation. Selina made no secret now that she loved me with all her soul. Again and again we met in the Glen, and grew closer and closer to each other in the cleft of the huge rock as the autumn wind began to rise or the soft, thick rain fell a few inches from us leaving us untouched.

I had never asked what would be the end of all this. I only knew that it was pleasant to have Selina by my side, to clasp her hands, and to look steadily into her eyes until her lips drew close to mine. The idea of marrying her never entered my mind, for I was a younger son, of luxurious, self-indulgent habits, entirely dependent on the haughtiest of fathers. The time drew near that I must make a move, and it seriously struck me that I might do worse than get over the winter and spring in the south of France. How pleasant it would be if I could keep that sweet face beside me, if I had such a fair travelling companion along the Riviera. And I smiled bitterly and groaned at the impossibility.

But the devil put it into my heart, Why should it be an impossibility ? Was such a hidden sweetness utterly beyond my reach ? The devil put it into my heart one night, as Selina and I stood by the wicket, close to the school-house door. The light from her sitting-room gleamed cheerfully through the evening mists, heavy as still, soft rain. "And won't you give a poor fellow leave to warm himself and a cup of tea, Miss Lane ?" I asked. Never hitherto, since that first day, had I entered this maiden sanctuary.

Selina had an instinctive feeling that it was rather Lady Eleanor's possession than her own ; a bashful sense that there was an impropriety in admitting a gentleman's evening visit while she thus lived alone. She hesitated a moment, and then led the way into her pretty room, which looked prettier than ever in the rich glow of the fire. I stood on the hearth and

opened my arms. I knew I had only to open my arms, and she would nestle in them like a lured bird. She made me occupy her chair of state, and drawing her stool close by rested her arm on my knee.

"The Glen is pretty enough, Lena, dearest," I said ; "but, after all, England is the stupidest of countries in the winter. A few hours of railway, two of sea, and a couple of days, and we should come to another world."

"And what is it like, Frank ?" she asked. I had made her leave off calling me that everlasting Mr. Adair. I was Frank; her Frank, her darling Frank, her dearest—and all the rest of the old foolery.

"It is the loveliest land you have ever dreamed of, Lena : a deep sea, the bluest of blue waters, and far beyond the towering snowy mountains that will not chill, but will only love and protect you."

"Ah ! you are like that mountain, Frank, dear."

"More like treacherous sand," I might have said ; but I went on quite otherwise. "The most delicious of drives and boatings ; groves of citron and orange, and tall palm-trees, as if you were in Asia itself ; and instead of freezing in a waterproof, as in England, your garden is full of flowers and the air full of birds ; and there is an old château there which I know well, as large as Dunster Hall, with turrets and battlements, and beautiful rooms which I know I could have for the next six months. Would you like to go there, my Lena ?"

"Oh, it would be delightful ;" and the innocent eyes glistened.

"Then come with me, Selina. Give the children their holidays a little earlier, and you shall see Italy with me."

"But Lady Eleanor would never let the holidays begin before the usual time," she said. "And one can't be married all in a hurry, Frank," she said, smiling, "for I suppose it's that what you're really thinking about ?"

"Oh, no. I don't mean *that*," I replied. For a moment there was a wild look of terror and a sudden troubled gaze. I had heard, without looking, so absorbed had I been in our talk, some sounds at the doorway, but I had hardly spoken those fatal words when there came a heavy, impetuous rap with a riding-whip at the half open door, and D'Arcy stood before me. I started at the recognition, and said gaily, "Well, D'Arcy, how are you, old fellow?"

He drew back with astonishment. "Miss Lane, my mother asked me to call and leave you this letter." And then, very gravely, "This *is* an astonishment, Adair. Will you come up to the Hall and see me to-morrow?" "All right, old man," I said, and in a minute he was gone.

The note was from Lady Eleanor. It told Selina Lane that she had heard rumours of her walking about a great deal with a gentleman quite beyond her own class in society; that in her unguarded position she ought to be very careful, and she hoped she would make a friend of the writer, and come up to the Hall to talk matters over. Lena wept and was inconsolable. I knew that there was just one way by which I could console her, but I did not take that way. What I did say made her kindle with astonishment and grief, and declare energetically that she would never see or speak to me again if I thus spoke. With great difficulty I was allowed to kiss and pacify the young beauty, and I went to my quarters wondering how I should brave it out with old D'Arcy in the morning.

I rode over the first thing next day. It has always been my rule to face disagreeables and "have it out" with a man. D'Arcy soon joined me in the library, and in a lifeless way took my hand.

"I am glad to see you, as I am going to leave England Adair, and possibly I may not see you again. I am going to join Bishop ——'s mission in South America."

He named the place, a place of swamp, of yellow fever, of savagery, of destitution. I started back.

"How infinitely absurd of you, D'Arcy. Why, in the name of goodness, are you going out to South America? It is not as if you had your own way to make in the world. You are an elder son."

"And I hope I shall long be an elder son," said D'Arcy. "I never wish to be anything more. There is no duty about here that my father does not discharge better than I could. If there is good work to be done in the wide world I must try and do it, even as others do, and I think that best."

To me he was only talking gibberish.

Then came the row.

"It was not very kind of you to be in the neighbourhood and not come to see us."

"You were away, D'Arcy."

"But my mother, Lady Eleanor, was at home. She has been very anxious about her young school-mistress, whom she has always loved and befriended. You are at the old game, Adair, flirting away and thinking of nothing but yourself."

"Something of the sort, I expect."

"If you have made her love you, do you mean to marry her?"

"I can't say that the idea ever occurred to me, D'Arcy."

"Then I suppose you will go away and not give any further trouble?"

"No; I don't think I shall do so, either."

"Frank Adair," said D'Arcy, "I must speak as plainly as possible. Do you think any of us could permit you to interfere with the happiness of a young girl who has my mother's friendship and protection? You have acted badly and basely as it is, but set the matter straight the best way you can; otherwise, Adair, we can never meet again as friends."

The scene struck me at first as unutterably sad. The whole aspect of the park seemed to shift and alter, the very trees and landscape to reel, the very doors to grow strange and forbidding, and the whole familiar aspect of things to grow alien and frosted. To see D'Arcy, too—my beloved D'Arcy,—for I now felt how his gentleness and power and learning had gained a wider influence over me than ever I had dreamed of—altered into another man altogether! There was an odd gleam in the eyes, a sarcastic curve on the lip, a haughty intonation in his voice, that struck me with astonishment and with dismay.

But I was certainly not to be moved by an alternative so sharply presented. I replied moodily and with rising passion,

I am not to be dictated to, D'Arcy; I shall do exactly as I think fit in the matter."

"Good morning, then," said D'Arcy, and calling a man he said, "Bring Mr. Adair's horse, and let Lady Eleanor know that I wish to see her in her room, if I can."

I went away without any leave-taking. When I next passed near the schoolhouse it was vacation time, and the place was shut up. After some deliberation I resolved, greatly to the detriment of my Oxford creditors, to send Miss Lane a hundred-pound note, as compensation for the supposed loss of her situation. It was returned to me through the dead letter-office. I made one or two inquiries after her, but was never able to trace her.

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### III.

I CONFESS I was greatly annoyed when, a year or two after this, my father told me that I was to enter the Church. He did not actually tell me that I must, but he gave me clearly to

understand that it was my interest to do so. I was not the eldest son, but then he was well able to give me a very fair patrimony for a younger son's portion. But one gloomy day there came the heavy crash of the failure of Overend and Gurney. My eldest brother had the entail, but the fortunes of the younger ones had vanished for the present until more could be saved out of the estates. There was the family living. My father had always wished that I should take it, but if I insisted on going to the bar or into the army, Cousin Frank would be very glad of it, or the old curate, who had grown grey in his office, would grow young again as rector. There was my home for me, but he would only allow me two hundred a year now. If he were spared for a few years he might be able to leave me as much or even more for life. But he could positively assure nothing but the living, and I ought to qualify for it, as the life of the present holder would probably shortly drop.

It seemed to me a dreadful grind; but on looking into matters more closely they were not so terrible after all. I belonged to two or three clubs already, and in a year or two I should be a member of the Athenæum. I might easily obtain a title in the diocese of London, and though the examination was difficult, yet having bagged a couple of honoraries, that is to say, having been lifted against my will out of the ruck of passmen into the honorary fourth class, I thought I might tackle the papers. I did not then think that in taking orders there was anything more to be tackled than the papers, an illusion out of which one is very soon forced to awaken. I secured a delightful curacy in the West End. I had nothing to receive; but then, on the other hand, there was nothing to do unless I chose. My incumbent was one who delighted to see a row of curates with their hands decorously folded, and clad in spotless surplices. I might intone the Litany whenever I happened to feel equal to that exertion; I was privileged to address the children, and

servants, and the few old ladies who would constitute our average afternoon congregation.

I stayed at a capital hotel while I was being examined at a grand old episcopal palace, whose diocese is left unnamed. London, I may say, is shared, though unequally, among four dioceses. Then I went into my modest rooms, which served me well enough with a skilful combination of my clubs. I believe there are clergymen who will fret and worry their lives away in their parishes, or stay in their studies half a day elaborating their discourses. That, certainly, was not my plan. I belonged to a set of men who knew how to take the sunny side of human life. I was presented at Court, frequented the Opera, was visible on the best days at the Botanic Gardens and the Horticultural, joined in little dinners at Greenwich and Richmond, got up little whist parties, and without quite liking the clerical life, nevertheless made it very endurable. Sometimes I went to evening crushes, but gave a decided preference to the excellent dinner-parties which were given in our decidedly aristocratic parish.

But I confess I was not quite happy or satisfied. Often, even in my dreams, the sad, grieved beauty of Selina Lane reproached me—often the half-cutting and all-contemptuous look of D'Arcy pierced me through. Goldsmith has a famous line how “fools that came to mock remained to pray.” But I thought that the man who read prayers might himself be a fool. Somehow even the very sermons, purchased as if they were a quack medicine, as in a sense they were, at a shilling three half-pence apiece, seemed to be directed against myself. There was something in that daily morning and evensong, something in the music and the echoes and the dim religious light, something in the words and aspects and the worshipping crowds that gradually penetrated my very soul.

I think I was kindly and well-disposed towards people, loving

the æstheticism of religion, and at times I would give very good advice to the choristers and singing-men. But somehow there was ever a deep reproach in my own soul. What was the use of walking harmlessly and irreproachably when there was no temptation to do otherwise, when every incitement was to the side of decorousness and respectability? People thought me a good man, spoke of me as a good man, but my conscience told me that my strength had been tested once for all in one supreme trial and had given way; that I, who so volubly invited sinners to repent, had tried hard to tempt an innocent being into sin, and had certainly drawn her into deep sorrow; and my cheek would tingle, and I would stamp down my foot with rage as amid the quickening sense of my responsibilities, and the growing seriousness of life, my own conscience branded me as a hypocrite.

Our senior curate was a tall gaunt man who came from some theological college in the north, and who had scanty social gifts to atone for the want of Oxford culture. But I could not help observing that his face would lighten up with a divine rapture as the sunset glow fell upon it during evensong; that whereas I never took evening duty unless it came to me in rotation, he was never absent; and that while I looked upon my profession as a kind of extra to my usual life, a sort of *πάρεργον*, his own whole life was dedicated to his sermons and active duties.

I only wrote two or three sermons, brief and bare, but I discovered that I possessed a kind of talent for social and satirical sketches, and found it much easier to write a biting essay than an edifying discourse. At first I took to the employment for the mere joy of excoriating people, and I confess that my sketches were a little personal, and I was twice cut by some friend at the club in consequence. But as cheques not despicable in amount, kept flowing in on the quarter days, I was not

displeased with the sense of profit as of power. If a friend chose to cut me the world was wide, and I might at any time pick up a dozen acquaintances for any one that I had lost. But as for acquaintances, I did not care for them. I had them by hundreds ; indeed I was almost a by-word for a man of the world with many friends.

But friends, in truth, I had none. I longed for those old days when D'Arcy and I had rooms on the same flight in quad, when we would spend day after day in free-spoken careless intercourse. I felt now how much I owed him, how much I loved him ; and as for happiness, there was nothing in this rich, varied London life that equalled the wild happiness with which I first drew Selina to my bosom, and heard her sobbing confession that she loved me.

I do believe that gaunt senior curate, Dobbs, looked upon me as little better than those metropolitan heathen, whom I was popularly supposed to be elevating and enlightening. I do believe that he cultivated my acquaintance with some dark design of elevating the tone of my mind, or something of that sort. He would put down some new theological work on the table loaded with novels and periodicals, not to mention gloves and foils, and beseech my best attention to the last brand new heresy of the day, with which I was sure to express much sympathy. Also he ran his eye, more pityingly than enviously, over the great cards of invitation which I had thrust into the glass over my mantelpiece.

Dobbs knew something—that is to say, for a raw outsider—of the charmed inner circle of a Londoner's life. He looked approvingly on the cards for the learned societies, though there were too many of the dancing and dining kind ; and the more I talked to him of my club life, the less he liked it. I told him that as I had nothing for my curacy I did not feel called upon to work much, but that I should prove a *divine* sort of fellow

as soon as I dropped into the fat family living, for the avowed sake of which I had donned the "cloth." Dobbs argued against this, and not unkindly, for he evidently liked me.

Dobbs rather reminded me of D'Arcy in his simplicity and goodness, but without that inimitable grace, courtesy, wit, and wisdom of D'Arcy—D'Arcy, who was sacrificing his rare gifts to those unappreciating Patagonians. He exhorted me to take more interest in my work. "Go and see some of the poor. Talk as naturally to the people in the pulpit as you quiz them in the 'Spatterclay.' Take some hopeless chronic case of illness, and watch it all through, from first to last; that will be a good apprenticeship to your *life-work*," said Dobbs, using that expression with a solemnity that I did not much care for. He could make every allowance for a man who had the misfortune to be an Honourable as well as a Reverend. "But really, old fellow, if it is worth while being a parson at all, you ought to carry out the idea a little more."

So argued Dobbs; and in a weak moment, prompted by various compunctionous visitings, I promised Dobbs that I would practically adopt his line of argument. Dobbs said he had to go down at Christmas into the country, to visit his old father, and if I would only take a share of his more pressing cases, he would go with an easier mind, and be able to stay for a longer period with his dad. Being good-natured—which was my solitary virtue—I assented, and Dobbs went off, pacified, to the wilds of Northumberland, leaving with me a list of such of his duties as now fell to my lot unequally to discharge.

My increased share in the daily services I conscientiously went through. Indeed, by this time I had quite developed a taste for church music, and took a positive delight in training the choir. But eleven days of Dobbs' Christmas vacation had elapsed before I thought of that ominous list of rich and poor. The poor, indeed, had not been neglected, for my housekeeper

had orders to deal out the customary doles, with an added amount for the sake of Christmastide. The cases being of a Christmas kind—that is to say, rheumatism or lumbago being the predominant type—I took things quietly. But as I dressed to go out for dinner on Christmas Eve, my conscience pricked me sore as I saw Dobbs' memorandum lying on my dressing-table, and I crammed it into my waistcoat pocket, vowing that I would attend to it as soon as Christmas Day was fairly past. Then amid the glancing lamps and in the frosty air, I stepped into a hansom and was whirled away to my Christmas-Eve party. Shall I ever, gracious heaven, forget that Christmas Eve?

The dinner was progressing towards a prosperous termination, when a note was slipped into my hand. It had been sent from Dobbs' house to mine, and the housekeeper had thought it best to send it on. “Mrs. Merton’s cousin is much worse, and would like to see Mr. Dobbs.” I quietly referred to my memorandum, and there I saw among the Christmas cases, “that case at Mrs. Merton’s, 15, Paradise Row,” with three asterisks, which I had unfortunately overlooked, but which I now thought to denote importance or urgency. I only stayed a few minutes to operate on the back of a pheasant, and drain another glass of champagne. I would pacify my conscience by going at once to Paradise Row, and would come back as soon as I could. I made my excuses, on the ground of an urgent case, and these were courteously received. As I left the room I thought I heard some one murmur, “Excellent young man,” which I took to myself with much complacency, as a thoroughly deserved compliment.

## IV.

PARADISE Row was not far off. It was, indeed, in my district, but I had never ascended any of its steps, or knocked at any of its doors. Externally it was a street of neat, substantial, and even large-sized tenements ; but I was sufficiently familiar with London to know that, although the building might only suffice for one well-to-do family, yet it was probably the habitation of a set of families. There was a row of three bells at the address given—a smaller number than ordinary—and an unusual neatness about the place. I noticed that it seemed full of flowering plants, and there was a sound of birds—indications of the frequent country tastes of poor Londoners.

Mrs. Merton, a decent looking person, with a careworn look, came to see me. Her cousin, she said, had been staying with her for seven or eight months, and had seen one or two great doctors ; but London did not agree with her so well as the country. They did not come to our church ; but as they lived in our parish, and as they had heard that Mr. Dobbs was such a very good gentleman, she had sent for him. Her niece might not live very long, she had need of comfort, and ought to see a clergyman. Mrs. Merton was sorry that Mr. Dobbs—of whom she evidently had a high opinion, which she did not extend to all the cloth—was away, but perhaps another clergyman might do as well. Then she opened the door of an adjacent apartment, and there, in a poor room, with a few faint signs of elegance about it, the suppleness of frame gone, the roundness of face and chin gone, but with cheek and eye brighter than ever, but with a fatal brightness, lay poor Selina Lane.

When she saw me, she gave a short, quick scream, and stretched out her arms wildly. “Oh, Frank, dearest ! at last—

at last!" Then she fell back, fainting, and there was a scarlet stream at her lips.

The motherly Mrs. Merton was astonished, as well she might be. For myself, I was in the highest degree deeply moved. Mrs. Merton supported the head of the sufferer, and told some one to run for a doctor. I did what I could, which was little or nothing; but I took her hand, whispering, "Selina, darling, you must lie very quiet, and not speak a word till the doctor comes." She only gave me a look—ah! a look that at this moment thrills my whole soul!—and clasped my hand. Evidently she did not associate me with the clergyman who had been sent for, but evidently thought that I had sought her out and found her. I certainly felt my position most embarrassing. Thus it is that our old follies find us out, and a forgotten past confronts us.

I had heard the name of a physician mentioned whom I knew to be one of the greatest men in his profession, and I presently went off to him, and was able to bring him back with me. Mrs. Merton waited for him, and I accompanied him home. He took the fee I proffered him, too accustomed to surprises, perhaps, to be surprised. He had seen the other medical gentleman, he said—a small general practitioner, who kept a druggist's shop round the corner—and the case was clear. They had stopped the hæmorrhage, which was not so alarming as might be thought, by an application of ice. It was not a case of which he could speak at all hopefully. In the ordinary course the patient would die, and before very long; but if you could altogether improve her general health, her life might be indefinitely prolonged. She had evidently been suffering a good deal from mental causes. "It seemed a very hard thing to say," added the doctor, "but it belonged to that class of cases in which rich people lived and poor people died. Only let the pretty young lady leave her poor lodgings, and avoid the rigours of the English winter now upon us, and make her calm and happy in mind,

and surround her with comforts and kindness, and she might have a new lease of life. Otherwise, the case would run its ordinary course." And here the doctor shrugged his shoulders.

That night I could not sleep.

Again and again I paced my chamber. Most restlessly I moved about. I was unable to slumber ; I was forced to think. And if you marry that girl—so struggled my thought into expression—just think what you will be doing. I recognised that, during the still hours of this sleepless night, that great question of my life must be debated and settled. It was a question that affected two lives. Considerations of time and of eternity belonged to those fast-fleeting minutes. "And if you marry that girl," said one voice—the voice of prudence, and secularism, and the world—"your London position is irretrievably gone. You become thwarted and clogged in life at one of its main turning-points. You will have to give up your curacy, and your father may be so offended that you may lose your living. You made a youthful error, which may be looked upon as condoned and forgotten, and you are willing to offer what reparation you can. The girl shall be removed, and have doctors, and nurse, and change of air, and comforts to the two-thirds of your substance. More than that you cannot do."

But another voice replied : "All these, with your love, might heal her; and without your love she would only pine and die. She has loved but you, and truly you have seen none whom you have so loved as her. Your money perish with you ; she would not touch it. You wrecked that young bright life. Heaven, in its mercy, permits you to make some retrieval of your selfishness, and, with a practical atheism, you refuse to make it. O man of God—if such in any sense you are—what a hardened hypocrite you will ever be to preach love and mercy when you have refused to learn the very alphabet of such lessons ! You are summoned in the Master's name to see the sick, and

you see one whom you have well-nigh slain by your selfishness, and this one, lying by the wayside torn and bleeding, you do not seek to heal, but strike through and through again. Be true to your better nature. Be able to look heaven in the face, and unblushingly serve its altar. Fling cowardly social fears aside. You are at least a man, and can work for those you love."

And so the two voices, in strophe and antistrophe, rose and fell, this way and that dividing the swift mind ; but somehow the balance seemed to incline in favour of the latter voice, and as the window-pane began to glimmer in the Christmas dawn, I slept at last.

I slept : and, so sleeping, I dreamed dreams, and saw visions. Somehow my memory seemed to travel back to the old days of Oxford life, with D'Arcy. I seemed to be sitting by the firelight in his room one winter's afternoon, waiting for "hall." I used to delight to find D'Arcy in his room between the lights. I might have come from rowing, and at the banks have talked my full share of such talk as was then at vogue amongst us oarsmen. D'Arcy, every second day, would walk or row by himself, and his rule was to do a little reading before "hall." He would always lay down his books as I came in, and would generally have something to say about what he had been reading. He was good enough to say that I always took it all in.

Was it memory, or fancy, or association, that in my dream I was sitting in the doubtful light, and D'Arcy was speaking in that low serious tone which he used at times, though seldom ? " You are perfectly insatiable of amusement, Frank," he said. " You may fling away your degree if you choose, but you cannot fling away your activity of mind ; that must find some *pabulum* or other. And I fear for you, my friend, lest you should turn out an *akolastus*" —that delicate phrase in old 'Totle (short for Aristotle), that indicates a man must needs go to the bad.

I awoke feverishly, and again I slept and dreamt.

It was D'Arcy again. The time seemed to be a time very near the Christmas vacation. We were taking our last turn in the Broad Walk. On the trees some dying leaves were still fluttering, and in the west some faint lights were still flushing. I was talking about some pretty girls whom I was to meet at Blenheim Park, and using one or two names rather too freely. "Well, old fellow," said D'Arcy, with a smile, "I have never been, thank heaven, in love yet, as you call it, but I daresay my time will come. If ever it does I hope I shall be able to speak with a little more feeling and respect about the damsel, than you fellows seem to do. You are like children thinking you are only in fun, but playing with fire, steel, or poison. I wouldn't profane my whole life, if I were you, Adair. Try and keep some little corner of it sacred." Then we had our usual badinage, meeting jest with earnest, and earnest with jest, but D'Arcy's thoughtful face and gleaming eyes were still fully bent towards me till the second in which I awoke.

Once more I slept, and D'Arcy ruled my dream.

My inner eye awoke on a most strange scene, unlike aught that I had ever seen before. There was a wild wilderness out-spread around, crowned with rugged tors of large number and variety. Beyond this there was a confusion of tumbled hills, the taller peaks being white with snow. A low water, around which was vegetation dank and dense. A coarse pavilion was here stretched out, and in the interior, on a cushion, lay D'Arcy apparently weak and ailing. A few books and mathematical instruments were near at hand.

I dreamed that I drew near to him, and took his hand in mine. Somehow neither of us seemed to feel the slightest surprise at our meeting thus strangely. "Ah, Frank," he said with his old sweet smile, "I shall have to play Mentor to your Telemachus till the end of the chapter. It is only the old advice, 'Do justice—love mercy—walk humbly.'" "I have

tried to do justice and mercy," said I, almost moved to tears. "I know it, dear old fellow," he said, and then his arm was flung across my shoulder, and I felt that I leaned my head upon his breast. What followed I know not, but I awoke with a mighty sob, and my eyes were wet with tears; for days I was vividly impressed with that thrice repeated dream.

I have no faith in any science of dreams, nor do I venture ordinarily to lay the least stress upon them. It was not till some months later that I knew D'Arcy died this very Christmas Eve of jungle fever in South America.

I need not go more fully into this history, nor tell how Selina, finding life intolerable and unhappy, had come up from the country to London in broken health and spirits, to find her only remaining relation. We were married at Torquay, and Dobbs married us. Later I took my wife to the South of France, and afterwards to Italy. Her fragile delicate loveliness perhaps surpasses her youthful beauty, but it often gives me a pang, as I think how it was that I had replaced the roses by the lilies. The great physician tells me that her life may be prolonged for years, but its tenure is uncertain, and for my delicate boy the future days are doubtful.

My father has long since been reconciled to me through the best of mothers—through the charm of my wife's nature—and I think I may add, by the evidence clearly given, that I have been roused from lethargy to work in earnest. I am afraid that they think me a sad absentee from my great living, but Selina is ever my chief care, for I know the preciousness of my treasure and the perilousness of its tenure. Ours is a life-long reconciliation; I know that I am beloved and forgiven. I venture to believe that my dear lost friend and I are reconciled till we meet again. Best of all, I am reconciled to my own conscience—to life, to work, to heaven!

## CROSS-PURPOSES.

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### I.

A BOUT three quarters of an hour after crossing the bridge of Kehl, on the Baden side of the railway from Paris to Frankfort, the traveller arrives at the small but not unimportant station of Appenweier. From here he may, if he elect to abandon the direct route, be transported by means of a branch line to Freiburg and Basle; or, by taking his seat in a nondescript vehicle half diligence, half omnibus, awaiting his pleasure at the door of the adjoining restaurant, penetrate into the recesses of the Black Forest, and at the close of an up-and-down-hill journey of two hours through a delightfully picturesque country, be safely landed at whichever of the rival bath establishments he may choose to honour with his preference, Petersthal or Griesbach.

It was to the last-named locality that, on a broiling July afternoon, a year or two before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, a family party, consisting of father, mother, and daughter, voluntary martyrs in a closely packed second-class carriage, were journeying from the neighbouring town of Carlsruhe, with the usual velocity of an ordinary German train. Herr Kanzeirath Piepenhagen, the chief of this little band of pleasure-seekers, was a stout middle-sized personage, considerably on the shady side of fifty, with small twinkling eyes, and a complexion bordering on the cadaverous; he wore a black

alpaca coat and waistcoat, gray trousers of some cheap native fabric, much too short for him, and a straw hat with a very broad brim; and on his knee reposed a green carpet-bag, emblazoned with a sprawling "Gute Reise," worked in worsted of divers colours.

His wife, sitting immediately opposite to him, was a sallow-cheeked, beetle-browed dame, whose age might have been anything over forty, and whose general aspect bore a striking resemblance to that of Mrs. Pipchin, as delineated by "Phiz;" her long lean fingers were busily engaged in the national exercise of knitting, and as if to prove that this occupation was purely manual, and in no degree monopolised her attention, she found leisure, without relapsing into inactivity, to address sundry acrimonious remarks to her liege lord with reference to her sufferings from heat, dust, flies, and other incidental grievances (for all of which, collectively and individually, she evidently held him responsible), and to reply in a less acrid tone to an occasional observation of Fräulein Piepenhagen, ensconced in the corner beside her.

Had Lavater himself been placed face to face with the damsel in question, we doubt whether he would have divined the possibility of any relationship between the particularly unattractive couple whose personal appearance we have endeavoured to depict, and the pretty and graceful girl whose prepossessing exterior, in spite of the ill-fitting cotton-dress and the flaming red shawl from the maternal wardrobe which constituted her travelling costume, contrasted so strangely with the Dutch tumbler-like unwieldiness of the Kanzleirath, and the stiff ungainly *tournure* of her lady mother. Fräulein Bertha had soft blue eyes, and a profusion of chestnut hair which, in defiance of the prevailing fashion, she wore in ringlets; her figure was slight, but exquisitely proportioned, and her tiny and well-shaped hands, encased, we regret to say, in a pair of yellow thread

gloves, might have served as a model for Houbigant or Jouvin. So much for the *physique* of our heroine ; when we add that she was of an amiable disposition, tolerably accomplished, and not altogether deficient in that tinge of sentimentalism peculiar to the maidens of the Fatherland, we shall have described her with sufficient accuracy.

The longest and most tedious journey—even on a German railway—comes sooner or later to an end ; after divers halts at Rastadt, Oos, Achern, and other intervening villages, the train at length slowly neared the station of Appenweier, and the Kanzleirath, who had been enjoying a fitful repose for the last quarter of an hour, received intimation of the fact by means of a sharp application of his wife's parasol on the calf of his leg.

“*Herr je !*” he exclaimed, starting up, and flattening his straw hat by coming in contact with the top of the carriage. “What’s the matter ?” he added, rubbing his eyes with his knuckles.

“Tickets ready !” sternly replied the Kanzleiräthin, “and don’t be all day about it.”

Before many minutes had elapsed the party were duly installed in the interior of the Eilwagen ; the luggage was securely packed on the roof, and the driver had already gathered up his reins preparatory to starting, when an individual in a fustian jacket, representing alternately the waiter, boots, and ostler of the establishment, signalled him to stop.

“Don’t be in a hurry, Schwager,” he said ; “there’s another passenger going with you.”

He had hardly finished speaking, when a young man, dressed in a suit of light-coloured tweed, and carrying a small portmanteau in his hand, emerged from the open door of the restaurant, and, glancing carelessly as he passed at the family trio inside the vehicle, took his seat on the coach-box, lit a cigar, and threw a piece of money to the expectant waiter.

"*Danke schön, Herr Baron,*" shouted that functionary, as the Eilwagen slowly rolled away.

When they were fairly in motion, the Kanzleiräthin gave her husband a nudge with her elbow.

"Did you hear that?" she inquired.

"Hear what?" murmured her spouse in a provokingly indifferent and drowsy tone.

"*Nein!*" exclaimed the indignant lady, "*das ist zu stark!* As I live, the man's half asleep again!"

"I heard, mother," interposed Bertha, anxious to prevent any further discussion; "the waiter said, Herr Baron. Do you suppose he is going to Griesbach, or only to Petersthal?"

"To Griesbach, of course," replied Frau Kunigunde decisively, with a look worthy of her imposing name. "No one who has any pretensions to good society would think of staying at such a hole as Petersthal." (It is probable that, had the Kanzleiräthin been bound to Petersthal, she would have said the same of Griesbach, but this by the way.)

"I wonder if he is really a Baron?" continued her daughter in a low whisper.

"Baron! pooh, nonsense!" growled Herr Piepenhagen, who, being at that moment sorely harassed by a persistent blue-bottle, had overheard the remark; "waiters will call any one Baron for six kreutzers!"

"Idiot!" muttered his lady wife, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder; after which display of conjugal endearment she relapsed into a haughty silence, which lasted with few interruptions until they reached the much-calumniated Petersthal.

To the great delight of at least two of his fellow-travellers, the stranger manifested no present intention of taking up his quarters at the *pension*, at the door of which the conductor of the Eilwagen made a short halt, on the chance of securing a

stray recruit or so for the remaining portion of his journey. No such volunteer, however, putting in an appearance, and the "Herr Baron," who had descended from his perch for the purpose of holding a brief conference with the landlord, with whom he was evidently well acquainted, having reascended to his seat, the ponderous vehicle resumed its course anew, and in little more than half an hour finally deposited its weary passengers at the hospitable portals of Herr Jockerst, proprietor of the establishment at Griesbach.

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## II.

WHILE the Piepenhagen family are reposing after their fatigue in the clean but sparingly furnished dormitories luckily reserved for them, every other nook and corner in the house, with the exception of a diminutive cell about the size of a Calais steamer deck-cabin, also retained for their travelling companion, being already occupied, it may not be amiss to describe as succinctly as possible the *locale* of our story. The three baths, Rippoldsau, Petersthal, and Griesbach, form a species of triangle of which the latter is the farthest point ; it is almost entirely encircled by a range of thickly-wooded hills, intersected by winding paths, and affording at various artistically contrived openings agreeably diversified views over the surrounding country.

The large straggling building under the direction of Herr Jockerst may be considered not merely as part and parcel of Griesbach, but as Griesbach itself ; inasmuch as, barring a scattered group of neighbouring cottages, it stands completely alone, and is absolutely monarch of all it surveys. Its architecture may be in some respects amenable to criticism, as having

no distinct character of its own, and leading one to suppose that the wings and out-buildings had been added to the original structure at subsequent intervals, as a means of satisfying the increasing demand for accommodation. The portion of the interior devoted to the requirements of the guests consists, besides the sleeping apartments, of a spacious and lofty hall used indiscriminately as dining and drawing-room; and here, in accordance with the primitive habits of the place, the visitors are wont to assemble after supper, and listen to the combined efforts of half-a-dozen musicians attached to the *pension*, whose services are rewarded by a fixed charge inserted as a separate item in the weekly bills.

The baths, the main object of most frequenters of this secluded spot, are disposed in subterranean chambers like cellars in the immediate vicinity of the spring; and in the rear of the premises is a pleasure garden, abounding in shady walks and sequestered nooks, equally suitable for repose or flirtation. When we have added that the ordinary society of the *pension* Jockerst is mainly composed of families from the adjacent towns of Carlsruhe, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, and Mannheim, attracted thither either by motives of health or economy, we shall have given a tolerably exact idea of the establishment into which our travellers are on the point of being introduced. And be it here parenthetically observed that had not Herr Piepenhagen, whose official salary barely averaged twelve hundred florins, or something like a hundred a year, been recently honoured by a supplementary gratification of two hundred florins, as a special mark of grand-ducal favour, he and his belongings might have sighed in vain for an opportunity of exchanging the dusty, sultry atmosphere of the Residenz for the pine-clad heights and fresh mountain breezes of Griesbach.

As soon as the first sounds of the bell summoning the guests to their evening meal were heard, a general rush took place for

the purpose of inspecting the names of the new arrivals, already recorded as follows in the Fremden-Buch :

“Herr Kanzleirath Piepenhagen, with wife and daughter, from Carlsruhe.”

“Heinrich Rosenberg, from Worms.”

“Then he is not a Baron after all,” whispered the disappointed Bertha to her mother, as they were adjourning to the supper-room.

“Who knows, child?” replied the stately dame. “Kings often travel *incognito*, and why shouldn’t Barons?”

“Rosenberg’s a pretty name at any rate,” said Bertha.

Whatever might be his social position, it soon became evident that Herr Heinrich Rosenberg was unanimously voted a decided acquisition to the little Griesbach colony. In the first place, he was remarkably good-looking,—*ce qui ne gâte rien*—and had (at least the ladies said so, and if they didn’t know, who should?) a peculiarly aristocratic air, and a bewitchingly fascinating smile; besides, he talked French *almost* without accent, and was always prepared with a choice fund of anecdotes adapted to every variety of hearers, upon which he drew largely for the entertainment of his neighbours at the supper-table. With Herr Jockerst he seemed as entirely at his ease as with the rival autocrat at Petersthäl, and displayed so intimate an acquaintance with rare vintages, that on his casually alluding to a certain Liebfrauenmilch carefully stowed away in the cellars of the *pension*, which he affirmed to be unrivalled, more than one old gentleman felt unable to resist the temptation, and, deferring to the judgment of so enlightened a connoisseur, ordered up a bottle forthwith.

Meanwhile the Kanzleirath was in the seventh heaven, having discovered among the guests an associate of his youthful days, once the wildest Bursch in the University of Heidelberg, and now a physician with a fair amount of practice at Stuttgart.

Dr. Schlosser and his charming daughter Wilhelmina, familiarly called Mina, a sparkling brunette of eighteen, had been for some years in the habit of passing their summers at Griesbach, and were consequently treated by its proprietor with a degree of respect seldom accorded to mere chance visitors; the place of honour at the public table being invariably reserved for the doctor, while the most desirable bachelors present were monopolised as a matter of course by his pretty companion.

Thus it happened that Herr Rosenberg naturally found himself seated between Fräulein Mina and the no less attractive Bertha, who was already on the best of terms with the Stuttgart beauty. Nor was Frau Kunigunde in any way disposed to disturb the universal harmony, being wholly engrossed by the conversation of a congenial spirit in the shape of a hook-nosed and spectacled maiden of eight-and-forty, one of her especial intimates at Carlsruhe. Fräulein Ulrica Bitterzung, irreverently termed by the incorrigible Mina *eine alte Schachtel*—in plain English, an old hag—was not only the main prop and pillar of that fearful institution, the afternoon *Kaffee Gesellschaft*, of which our “five-o’clock tea” is a feeble and comparatively harmless imitation, but as inveterate a scandal-monger and reputation-destroyer as could be met with from one German frontier to another.

“From early morn to dewy eve”—or as long as daylight lasted—Fräulein Ulrica would sit at her ground-floor window, on the outside of which a mirror was so cunningly fixed as to reflect for the good lady’s recreation, and in a kind of panoramic procession, whoever chanced to pass up or down the street, and afford her, moreover, an inquisitorial peep into the doings of her opposite neighbours. It may be imagined, therefore, with what undisguised rapture the worthy spinster, who had been located at Griesbach for upwards of a fortnight, and who felt her tongue growing rusty from sheer want of exercise, was

inclined to welcome the advent of so accomplished a retailer of tittle-tattle as the Kanzleiräthin ; and were we to describe their first interview as “a character dead at every word,” it is possible that we should not be far wrong.

On the removal of the supper-table, the younger members of the company assembled together by common consent at the end of the hall occasionally appropriated to dancing ; the musicians struck up a lively measure, and if Herr Rosenberg had previously created a favourable impression by his good looks and captivating manner, it was increased a hundred-fold by the grace and lightness of his waltzing, which was pronounced to be perfectly Viennese. Devoting himself alternately to the *piquante* Mina and the sentimental Bertha, as the only votaries of Terpsichore present worthy of his notice, he profited by each pause in the giddy whirl to whisper soft nothings in his partner’s ear, and then plunged anew into the intricacies of the *deux temps*, until the very fiddlers, being fairly exhausted, struck work, and the party broke up.

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### III.

IT must be acknowledged that the ordinary mode of life adopted by the frequenters of Griesbach is strictly primitive and hygienic, and holds forth little inducement to the lovers of gaiety and dissipation. The early breakfast, the baths and the prescribed regimen of the waters, the one-o’clock dinner, and the evening meal succeed each other day after day with uniform regularity : while the out-door amusements are chiefly confined to a stroll in the garden or an occasional ramble on the adjoining hills. It necessarily follows, therefore, that the guests, being

thrown more or less on their own resources, are disposed to be mutually sociable, and that the customary ceremonies of introduction are to a certain extent, if not altogether, dispensed with ; it being of course understood that acquaintance thus commenced *n'engage à rien*, and may be dropped *ad libitum* on any future meeting by either party concerned.

This facility of intercourse, combined with his own personal qualities, may in some measure account for the exceptional popularity enjoyed by Herr Rosenberg almost from the very instant of his arrival ; but it is only fair to add that he did his best to deserve it, and strove by every means in his power to render himself generally agreeable. He was always the first to propose some new excursion or to start some topic of conversation likely to interest his hearers. He could talk politics with the old, and descant on the last literary or theatrical novelty with the young ; nay, he pushed his complaisance so far as to win Fräulein Bitterzung's heart by confiding to her private ear divers slightly unorthodox anecdotes (invented on the spur of the moment), which that estimable dame carefully stored up in her memory for the edification of her intimates in the Residenz. In a word he became so universal a favourite that whenever, as frequently happened, he paid a flying visit, on the plea of urgent business, to Petersthal or Rippoldsau (though what business he could possibly have at either place puzzled the society extremely), his return was looked forward to with as much anxiety as if the welfare of the entire community depended on it.

"I can't imagine what takes him away so often," said the Kanzleirath, during one of these absences to his friend Schlosser, "the Grand Duchess isn't at Rippoldsau just now, and there can't be a soul worth speaking to at the other place."

"Bah!" remarked the Doctor ; "I'll wager there's a sweetheart in the case. Young men will be young men, you know."

Herr Jockerst, who was standing by, smiled significantly, but said nothing.

We strongly suspect, however, that neither Fräulein Piepenhagen nor her merry companion, had they been present at the time, would have refrained from indignantly protesting against so monstrous a supposition, as an unwarrantable insult to the fair ladies of Griesbach in general, and their own pretty selves in particular. Each of them being thoroughly convinced that she alone was the magnet capable of inducing the handsome stranger to prolong his stay in so uncongenial a desert—for he was notoriously sceptical as to the medicinal virtues of the baths, and steadfastly declined even to taste the waters—they would have ridiculed, as it doubtless merited, the idea of an equally potent counter-attraction existing elsewhere.

Not that either had in reality any proof positive that she was the exclusive object of Herr Rosenberg's preference, his attentions having been hitherto confined to those vague and indefinite gallantries which may mean a great deal or nothing; but the language of the eye has a peculiar eloquence, and they both fancied, rightly or wrongly, that he only awaited a favourable opportunity to express the feelings which his admiring glances had already (in their opinion) sufficiently manifested.

As far as Fräulein Schlosser was concerned, this state of things might have lasted *ad infinitum*, the damsel being as yet completely heart-whole, and a dead hand at flirtation into the bargain ; looking upon matrimony as an eventuality to be postponed as long as practicable, but not the less determined to hold her own against all comers and at all hazards, whenever circumstances should render the sacrifice necessary.

With Bertha the case was more serious ; she had neither the worldly experience nor the prudential foresight of Mina, but was too apt, in love matters especially, to follow the dictates of her

own susceptible nature and attribute perhaps an undue importance to what M. de Talleyrand appropriately characterises as "first impressions." Since the day of her *rencontre* with the supposed Baron at Appenweier and their simultaneous arrival at Griesbach, she had allowed her imagination to indulge in certain visionary and ultra-romantic fancies, of which he was of course the hero and she as inevitably the heroine; and had ascribed to every chance word or look subsequently addressed to her by Heinrich Rosenberg a signification, which she flattered herself, not without reason, no one else could by any possibility have divined.

Her conviction that he was not what he pretended to be was strengthened by the oracular decision of Frau Kunigunde, who, having once made up her mind that he must be a nobleman in disguise, would not have abandoned her darling theory for an empire; more particularly as her husband was of a contrary way of thinking. It was, indeed, mainly in a spirit of opposition to that gentleman that she had complacently encouraged her daughter's evident predilection for their former fellow-traveller, hoping thereby to put a stop to a proposed arrangement which had been frequently talked of previous to their leaving Carlsruhe.

The Kanzleirath's salary being, as before stated, extremely moderate, and his private fortune *nil*, the discovery of a suitable *parti* for Bertha had naturally become an object of paramount importance; and an opportunity had lately presented itself, which, if not in all respects satisfactory, was too advantageous to be rejected without due consideration. Herr Schneegans, or, to give him his full official title, Herr Unter-Assessor-Substitut Schneegans, a promising young bachelor of eight-and-thirty or thereabouts, deriving a fair income from his post, and enjoying moreover a comfortable independence of his own, had for some time held a prominent position among the admirers of Fräulein Piepenhagen, and in a recent interview

with her father had declared his intentions and wishes in the most unequivocal manner.

Had the offer been made in the first instance to the *Kanzleiräthin*, it is more than probable that she would have jumped at it, and the consent of Bertha, as the principal party concerned, being taken for granted, the course of Herr Schneegans's love would have run as smoothly as he could have desired ; but her ideas on the subject not having been consulted, she felt it her bounden duty, if not to impose an absolute veto, at least to throw as much cold water on the project as she conveniently could. "For," as she shrewdly remarked to her inseparable *confidante*, Fräulein Bitterzung, "an assessor is no great catch after all, and the young man here *may* mean something. If the worst comes to the worst, we can always fall back on Herr Schneegans."

Whether the young man alluded to meant anything or not, it is certain that he had no objection to officiate as cavalier in ordinary to two such attractive damsels as Bertha and Mina ; and even the latter, careless and light-hearted as she was, could not help feeling flattered by the homage which, to do him justice, he distributed to one and the other with the strictest impartiality. We may judge, then, of their feelings when one night after supper, during a pause in the conversation, he quietly announced his departure for Frankfort on the ensuing afternoon. Had a thunderbolt fallen among the assembled company, they could hardly have been more startled ; protests against so unexpected a desertion arose from all parts of the hall, and every argument that could be urged to induce him to prolong his stay was tried, but in vain.

Business, said Herr Rosenberg, must be attended to ; he had already outstayed his time, and despite his reluctance to tear himself away from so agreeable a society, there was no help for it, and go he must. Rising as he spoke, with the pretext of

necessary correspondence as a reason for his withdrawal, but in reality anxious to escape further importunities, he left the room, and repaired to the private apartment of Herr Jockerst, with whom he remained closeted until the other guests had retired to rest.

"Bring him to book to-morrow before he starts," whispered Frau Kunigunde to her daughter, as they separated at the doors of their respective bedrooms.

Poor Bertha smiled faintly, and said she would do her best.

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#### IV.

ON the following morning after breakfast, profiting by a momentary absence of her friend Mina, Fräulein Piepenhagen slipped unnoticed into the garden at the back of the house, and established herself and her embroidery-frame on a bench commanding a good view of the *pension*. She had not been there long when the sound of footsteps hastily approaching on the gravelled path caught her ear, and in another instant Heinrich Rosenberg was at her side.

"Pardon me, Fräulein," he began, "for thus intruding on your solitude, but I could not quit Griesbach without expressing my deep regret to those in whose society I have passed so many happy hours, and to none more sincerely, more truly, than yourself. My minutes are counted, but before I go I must see and speak with the Herr Kanzleirath; I have a request to make, which I hope and believe he will grant, in which case one of the principal objects of my stay will have been attained. As I trust ere long to have an opportunity of visiting Carlsruhe, I will not say adieu, but *auf Wiedersehen*."

With these words, and a lingering glance at the blushing maiden, whose emotion had prevented her from uttering a syllable in reply, he lifted his hat respectfully, and hurried down the alley by which he had arrived, leaving Bertha in a state of agitation easier to imagine than to describe. How long she remained absorbed in her reflections—very pleasant ones apparently—she knew not; but after a while she felt a gentle hand on her shoulder, and looking up beheld Fräulein Schloesser, all smiles and good humour, but more excited than usual.

"What is the matter, *mein Schatz?*" asked Mina. "I have been searching for you everywhere, for I have a bit of news that will surprise you. He is gone to speak to papa."

"I know he is," replied Bertha in a low voice. "He told me so himself."

"Told *you!*!" echoed Mina, staring with astonishment; "what could he be thinking of?"

It was now Bertha's turn to stare.

"Why shouldn't he tell me that he was going to ask *papa's* consent?" she said.

"Did he say that?" inquired Mina, rather sharply.

"Not those very words," answered Bertha; "but of course that is what he meant."

"Then, *meine liebe*, you must have misunderstood him. It was *my* papa he alluded to, not yours. I have it from his own lips; he called him Herr Doctor."

"To me he said Herr Kanzleirath," retorted the other.

"I can't make it out," said Mina, "unless the man's a Turk, and wants to marry us both. Come with me; my father and yours are playing chess in the little arbour yonder, and I can't rest till I know who is right."

So saying the impetuous young lady darted off at a rapid pace, followed by Bertha, in the direction of the snug retreat where the two old gentlemen were comfortably enjoying their game.



A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

II. 206.



"Is Herr Rosenberg gone, papa?" was Mina's first question when they arrived quite out of breath.

"Gone!" exclaimed the doctor. "Yes; a quarter of an hour ago. He wouldn't wait for the omnibus, but borrowed Jockerst's gig, as he wanted to catch the early train."

"Did he ask you anything before he went?"

"How curious you are this morning, puss!" laughingly replied Herr Schlosser. "Well, if you must know, he did ask me something."

"And what answer did you give him?"

"I told him I had no particular objection."

"There, you see!" cried Mina, with a triumphant look at Bertha. "Didn't I tell you so?"

At this moment Frau Kunigunde and Fräulein Bitterzung, who had been strolling down an adjoining walk, approached the group.

"But surely, papa," said Bertha to the Kanzleirath, "he asked *you* something too?"

"So he did, my dear," answered her father.

"And you told him?"

"I told him I was much obliged, but that he had better try somebody else."

"You said *that*, Gottlieb," interposed his wife in her deepest and most impressive tragedy tone, "when your child's happiness is at stake?"

"My child's happiness!" repeated the bewildered Kanzleirath.  
"What has she to do with it?"

"Did he not ask you to consent to his marriage with Bertha?" she continued.

At this question Dr. Schlosser, who had been staring at one and the other alternately, burst into a fit of laughter, and even the unfortunate Kanzleirath ventured on a feeble smile.

"He asked me to allow him to send me a couple of casks of

Liebfrauenmilch," said the latter, "and I thought it too dear. Schlosser has ordered one, but then he can afford it, and I can't."

"Either you must have lost your senses, or I mine," disdainfully remarked Frau Kunigunde. "Perhaps you will kindly inform me who *is* Herr Rosenberg?"

"Neither more nor less than the travelling agent of Propf & Keller, wine merchants at Worms," replied the Doctor, stifling his merriment as well as he was able. "I could have told you that a week ago, if you had asked me. And all I can say is, if what he sends me is equal to the sample we tasted the other evening, I sha'n't complain."

"His daughter will hardly be of the same opinion," whispered Fräulein Bitterzung in her friend's ear; "unless, like Bertha, she has a Schneegans to fall back upon!"





## JACK'S WIFE.

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### I.

YOUNG John Burton would not marry. It was a great pity, for he was an eldest son with good prospects and a present income of nearly two thousand pounds. He had a handsome face of the fair Saxon style, a well-built figure, and an easy jovial temper. Perhaps he was not exactly of a type fitted to inspire romantic maids with sentimental yearnings, but his disposition was one eminently suited for domestic wear, and his friends were apt to say of him a little regretfully, "What a capital husband he would make!" And now he was thirty-three, and it was firmly believed that he had never at any time of his life entertained the least intention of matri-

mony, or had even been at the trouble of seeking to make himself specially agreeable to any maid, wife, or widow in town or country.

Old Burton, who was just as sweet-tempered and easy-going as his son, used to reassure his wife and comfort himself with the contented but somewhat vague anticipation, that "Jack would settle down some day when the right young woman turned up." For now and then the old people felt sorry to find their sixty years upon them, and no grandchildren growing up to cheer their dark days, and to brighten their son's home when they should have left it. Sitting together sometimes in the evening, while Jack was smoking a cigar on the terrace, they would discuss the matter in some such fashion as this ; the old gentleman sipping his coffee complacently in the intervals of the conversation, and his wife meantime busy with her needle or knitting-pins.

"John," Mrs. Burton would say softly—it was generally she who started the conversation on this particular topic—"John, my dear, don't you think it might be well if you were to point out—of course only as a hint, you know—to our Jack the advisability of thinking about getting himself a wife ? "

"It has often occurred to me to do so, Bessie, but he doesn't seem to me to care for anybody. A man should be in love before marrying, or else, according to my views, he will be miserable after."

"It is odd he doesn't fall in love," says Mrs. Burton, with a reflective air, "considering how many nice girls there are in the county. Alice Fairfax, for instance, and Constance, and that charming little Kate Harries ! Kate was at the hunt-ball last Tuesday, you know, and she looked lovely. He danced with her three or four times, but his manner was just the same to her as to all the rest."

"Or there is Georgie Sandhurst, his old playmate. Jack and

she used to be great friends before he went to Oxford. But she's almost always in London now, staying with her cousins."

"*That* little flirt! O John, Georgie will never marry at all; she is quite as bad as Jack himself! They say she has refused ever so many offers, and means to die an old maid."

"I know she is a great flirt and has several ardent admirers, but I doubt her having definitely refused anybody. I fancy Miss Georgie is rather the sort of young woman to engage herself three or four deep than to say a serious 'no' to any one of her swains."

Mrs. Burton laughs. "I shouldn't wonder," she says; "but neither you nor I would care to see Jack in the ranks of the noble army. No, Georgie is very fascinating, but she is not steady enough for our boy. She is devoted to dogs and horses, and I have heard her called 'fast.'"

"I don't know exactly what that term implies, my dear. But though Georgie is certainly daring and perhaps giddy, I am sure she is genuine and has a good heart. You must make allowances for her; the poor child has been an orphan since her infancy, and her uncle has let her run wild. She is more like a boy than a girl; but there's no harm in her."

"Mr. Sandhurst wishes her to marry, I know, for he told me so not long since. She is of age now, and he will leave all he has to her. But I should prefer Kate Harries or Connie, or anyone else. Georgie cares for nobody save herself and her horses, but the other girls are different. And Kate's family is excellent—old on both sides. She comes of a thoroughly good stock. Cannot Jack be induced to think about it?"

She lays her work down on her lap, and looks appealingly at her husband. Old Burton smiles, sighs, shakes his head, and at length answers with confidence,

"He'll settle down, Bessie, you may be sure, before long—when the right young woman turns up, my dear; we all have

to wait for that. Why doesn't he come in ? its freezing out on the terrace now. But Jack always likes the cold. He'll be wanting a cup of coffee in a minute ; is it hot still ? "

One evening after a parental discussion closely resembling the foregoing, Jack, returning to the drawing-room, announced his intention of leaving home on the morrow, for a few days' visit to an old college friend in a neighbouring county.

" You'll be back by Christmas-day, Jack, of course ? " said Mrs. Burton. " We couldn't sit down to dinner without you."

" Of course I shall be back, mother ; come home on Christmas-eve."

" Tom wants to have a carpet-dance on Christmas-eve," she continued. " I didn't refuse—it is to be only small and early. You will be here in time for it ? "

" O, yes. Who is to be asked ? "

" The Jeffery girls, and Dolly Forester, and Kate. You like Kate, I think ? "

" Anyone else ? " said Jack, evading the answer.

" The Smyths, Connie and Alice, and perhaps Georgie Sandhurst, if she is not in London. Tom will ask his friends, and you can give him any names you like. We don't want more than eighteen or twenty in all. If you start to-morrow morning, it will be best to give him your list at once. He is in his lathe-room."

Jack put his empty coffee-cup on the table and went to join his younger brother.

## II.

ABOUT a week later, in the early afternoon of Christmas-eve, Jack Burton, having concluded his visit, stood on the platform of a railway-station about thirty miles from his home, awaiting the arrival of the down-train. It was a bright frosty day ; cloudless, keen, and crisp ; a day to put one in high spirits and in the best of humours. But the train was late, as trains are apt to be on Christmas-eve, and when at length it panted into the little station, there proved to be but scant space left in the first class carriages.

"There's a *coupé* that doesn't seem full," cried Jack to the bewildered porter. "I'll get in there."

He opened the door hastily and sprang in. In the further corner sat a single passenger, a lady, closely enveloped in furs, and looking out of the opposite window. For a moment Jack hesitated, wavered, and would perhaps have retired, had time and fate permitted. But before his uncertainty could shape itself in word or act, a shrill whistle sounded, a voice cried "Right!" and with a jerk and a scream the train sped onward.

"How are you, Mr. Jack Burton?" said a brisk, silvery voice from beneath the fur hat in the corner.

"Why, Georgie Sandhurst, fancy my getting into your *coupé*? No doubt you were put in here by your discreet cousin to be kept in safety and seclusion, and I have trespassed on the preserves."

"No, you are wrong! I was put in here at Euston, with my maid to take care of me. But I turned her out at the last station we stopped at, and sent her into another carriage."

"How naughty of you! Why did you do that?"

"If I don't tell you why, you will never guess; and if I do tell you, you won't believe me."

Jack laughed. " You talk conundrums, Miss Georgie, and I am far too lazy to unriddle anything so intricate. But I am very inquisitive too."

" Well, I'll tell you. Perhaps you may help me. I turned Belinda out because I wanted to be alone ; and I wanted to be alone because—" She paused, hesitated, and slightly reddened.

" If you wanted to be alone, it follows that I must be *de trop*," said her companion, feeling in his turn somewhat embarrassed.

" O no ! " cried she quickly. " I don't mind you—you are not like Belinda, you know. But I am making a momentous journey to-day, Mr. Burton ; for between the next station and H—— I must choose a husband."

" Choose—a husband ! What *do* you mean ? "

" Why, just this. It is four years since I 'came out,' you know, and in that time people seem to think I have flirted a great deal. Perhaps I have ; but you see it has been my misfortune to like so many fellows, and yet not to like any of them quite enough. Anyhow, uncle says I must make up my mind—and he has written to tell cousin Mary that I must really say 'yes' to somebody or 'no' to all ; and she has been worrying me about it horribly for ever so long. And it seems that uncle has had three or four 'bids' for me lately, and he wrote and told me of them last week, and said that when I came home to-day I must come with a definite reply, for he couldn't stand it any longer, and people were saying I was heartless and all sorts of abominable things.

" Well, I considered and considered, but I *couldn't* make up my mind. First I thought I liked this one best, and then that; and then another ; and then I began considering all over again, and each time it was worse. At last the idea struck me that if I could put them all in a row, and compare them with one another,

I might arrive at a clear decision. So long as one only sees people at different times, and in different places and circumstances, it's so much more difficult to judge fairly of each. Now I can't exactly put all my candidates in a row, but I have hit on a lovely plan of seeing them all within an hour, one after another ; and this is what I have done. I wrote to them all, and told each that I was coming down from London to-day, and particularly wished to see and to speak to him a moment on important business, and that my train would stop at such and such a station at such and such a time, and if he would be on the platform I should be very glad to say a few words to him. I appointed a different station for each—the one I thought would be within most convenient distance, according as the candidate was accustomed to ride or walk ; and there are just ten minutes between each stoppage. It will be exactly like a review, a kind of 'march-past' of the regiment, you know. They are to begin at the next station."

"How many applicants are there ?" asked Jack, immensely amused and interested.

"Six. You see it will all be done within the hour ; and then I shall collect my impressions, and make up my mind which of them I really prefer. It's no use attempting to do it any other way, because, when I try to do it mentally, I find there's so much to be said for and against each. But if I see and talk to them one after another, and am able to compare each with each, I shall be sure to find out the nicest. Isn't it a grand idea ?"

"It is worthy of you, Georgie ; therefore it is profoundly ingenious and wildly startling. The train is slackening speed now. Who is to be on view at the first station ?"

Georgie slipped her fur hat aside, disclosing a rosy face with full-curved lips, a "tip-tilted" nose, and a pair of merry brown eyes. "I have written down the names in order in my pocket-

book," said she, producing from a recess in the folds of her mantle the article in question.

"Tambridge Station—Cecil Vivian."

Jack was about to utter a commentary, but Georgie lifted a warning finger and he was silent in time, for the train had already stopped. She leaned from the *coupé* window, nodded gaily, and cried,

"Glad to see you, Mr. Vivian ! I thought you would do me the kindness to come, especially as I know you ride over here so often. Think you have met Mr. Burton ?"

"I have had that pleasure once or twice," said a melancholy measured voice ; and a tall man in riding-gear, dark-skinned and heavily-moustached, stood by the carriage, clasped Georgie's proffered hand, and bowed gravely to Jack.

"So you are returning from town, Miss Sandhurst, and I hope for some time ? Do you get out here ?"

"O no ! I go on home to H——. I wanted to see you for a moment only as I passed, and I supposed this was your nearest station. What a lovely day ! perfect for riding, isn't it ?"

"Perfect. You are good enough to wish to honour me with some commission, I think ?"

"Certainly," cried Georgie hurriedly ; "it is about a horse, the horse Miss Dawtry wants to sell, you know—bay, with black points. I have ridden him once or twice. Could you be so kind—"

The guard blew his whistle and waved his hand warningly, "Step back, sir, please ; the train's off!"

"One moment, my good fellow," said Vivian, with an air of authority ; "I wish to speak to this lady."

"Beg pardon, sir ; behind time. Can't wait !"

"O, never mind, then !" cried Georgie energetically ; "it doesn't matter in the least. Another time will do. So kind of

you, Mr. Vivian ! Horrid of them to be in such a hurry ; see you at my uncle's instead. Good-bye."

An expression of infinite disgust, not unmixed with anger, gathered upon Vivian's dark face as Georgie drew back into her corner, and the train swept on. Surely he had provocation ! To ride some twelve miles on a freezing day to keep an appointment on "business" with one's adored, and to be dismissed in this airy fashion, as though the whole meeting were the merest accident ! But perhaps the experience would serve to lessen the pangs of a greater disappointment assuredly in store for him.

Jack laughed outright.

"Poor Vivian !" said he. "I fancy we have not left him so good-humoured as we found him. I really begin to think you are what the Yankees call 'a cool hand.'"

"What do you think of him ? "

"I should say," answered Jack, with deliberation, watching her face closely as he spoke—"I should say that he will not suit. He is too melancholy for you, too ceremonious ; and he has a temper, Georgie ! I saw it flash out when we started. He has a 'vicious eye,' like your old chestnut Xantippe."

Georgie opened her pocket-book demurely, and drawing out her pencil,

"But, Mr. Jack," said she, "he is so very rich. Old Sir Cecil, his grandfather, has left him all his property."

"I wouldn't put wealth in the scale against happiness if I were you, Georgie," said her companion, more earnestly.

She drew a line dividing a page of her pocket-book in the centre, and wrote at the top of one column, "Advantages ;" at the top of the other, "Disadvantages." Under the first column she inscribed the words, "C. V. : Rich ;" under the second, "Melancholy ; vicious eye." Then she handed the memorandum to Jack.

"That's business-like, at all events," said he, more and more amused. "What a funny girl it is! Are you going to make similar entries on all the 'applicants'?"

"Certainly," replied she, shutting the book. "'Aids to Meditation,' you know. Here's station No. 2."

"And who is here?" asked Jack, bending eagerly towards the window. "I don't see anybody except old General Benbow!"

"Well," she returned, in a low swift whisper, "he's the man. Don't exclaim; they're all ages and sizes."

The train stopped: the General advanced with the courtly bow of an old-fashioned gentleman.

"Good-morning, Miss Georgina. How are you, Burton? I am glad to see Miss Sandhurst has so efficient an escort. We have missed her sadly of late in this part of the world." Then after a few kindly commonplaces, "And the 'business,' Miss Georgie? though the pleasant anticipation of seeing you was quite business enough to bring me here."

"You are too good, General; but the fact is your gamekeeper has a mastiff, a beautiful dog, which my uncle admires greatly—Now I want to give uncle a Christmas present, and of course I couldn't ask Gough about it before him, you know, and so I thought it would be a good idea to get you to meet me here and let me know if Gough would bring his dog over to-morrow morning after church. He wants 5*l.* for him, I think. Now——"

"Say no more about it, Miss Georgie! Of course the mastiff is yours to do what you please with. Gough shall take him over to you by noon; but mind, you don't owe him anything. No, no; don't be cruel, Miss Georgie! Give me this pleasure, or we shall quarrel, and that won't do at Christmas-time—peace and goodwill, you know! You haven't an idea what a delight it is to me to be of service to you, even in so small a

hing ! There's your train starting ! Good-bye, both of you, ill we meet again !"

And the General was left on the platform nodding, smiling, and waving his hand towards the receding *coupé*.

" Well, Mr. Burton, isn't *he* charming ? "

Georgie leaned back as she put the interrogatory, and fixed her bright eyes full on her companion's face.

" Yes ; extremely charming. I have always thought the old General the best and most thoroughly kind-hearted fellow in the county, barring *my* superior officer, of course."

Georgie seized her pencil.

" But," continued Jack, " although he would make you an excellent papa-in-law, the pity is he has no son to make you a husband."

" What do you mean ? "

" That girls of twenty should not mate with dear old boys of sixty. No, Miss Georgie, he is not to be thought of in the particular capacity under consideration. Think of the infirmities to which in about ten years' time he will in the natural course of things be subject ! You will then be in the prime of your womanhood, and will need, not a patient to mind, but a protector to mind *you*. He is too old by half; and it is his only fault, but it is decisive against him."

She was silent an instant, musing, and a regretful expression lifted the corners of her eyebrows and depressed her lips. Then she made a short entry : " General B.: Perfect temper. Too old for the work."

" The next candidate," she said, consulting her list, " is Mr. Piggott-Crawford."

" What ! the Rector of Burnitt ! You can never think in sober earnest of becoming a parson's wife ? "

" No, frankly. I don't think it would suit ; but still I thought I'd trot him out, as he seems to have gone in seriously for me

I suppose he thinks *I* should suit *him*, or he wouldn't have done it."

"I am curious to know what 'business' you can have invented as the occasion of a rendezvous with *him*! Not a horse or a dog, I should fancy?"

"Of course not, you goose; but hothouse flowers for his church decorations to-morrow! I told him in my note that if he would be at the station as I passed, and let me know whether they would be acceptable, I would send Robert over on a pony to the rectory this evening with a basketful of camellias and white winter roses for the altar. Hush, we are stopping, and there he is!"

The interview with the Rector of Burnitt was but a brief one; for no passenger alighted, and the train remained stationary only long enough to allow Georgie's reverend suitor time for an acknowledgment of her offer and eager acceptance of it.

"So thoughtful of you, my dear Miss Sandhurst. I only wish you could come over to the early celebration to-morrow and see how beautiful the altar will look; but of course you will be assisting at your parish church. To-night we have a midnight service, you know. I love the sweet old Catholic custom, don't you? Good-bye, and God bless you!"

Then, without consulting Jack, Georgie wrote on the recording page :

"P.-C.: No advantages. Much too slow a goer."

"That disposes of No. 3," said she.

"And who is No. 4?"

"You will never guess."

"I should never have guessed the last two candidates. But you seem to compel all hearts alike—old and young, grave and gay. We have had the army and the Church; perhaps the next applicant will represent the profession of medicine or of law?"

"No ; he is 'a scion of a noble house,' as the sixpenny novelists say. Unless he play me false, you are about to behold the lofty and aristocratic lineaments of a British peer of the realm ! "

"O, now I know your man ! It is Lord Pinkerville ! Well, that is no surprise at all. Everybody in the county settled the natch between you ten or twelve months ago."

Georgie tossed her head and pouted. . . .

"Everybody had better mind their own business," said she, grammatically, but with severe emphasis. "I only put him down in the list because he happened to be one of the lot, and must be taken in order. But he is quite too dreadfully odious ! "

"And why ? "

"He hasn't an idea in his head. At least, I am forced to that conclusion ; for he is one of those men who think it necessary when talking to a woman to avoid mentioning anything of interest, public or private. Therefore, as I have no means of knowing whether he ever thinks at all on any other subjects than lawn-tennis and the last new waltz, he is no more to me than a mere talking doll in masculine attire."

"You are strong-minded, then, Miss Georgie ? "

"I fear not ; for, you know, that word is anything but a reproach. Surely it ought rather to be a reproach to be thought weak-minded. I like a woman who dares to think her own thoughts and to do her own deeds, and to be a person instead of a thing ! I wish to be a person, and I should like my husband to be one too."

Jack became more interested than ever in this quaint little girl and her naïve ingenuous speeches.

"Yet," said he, "they say you prefer horses to persons, and all animals generally to the male biped of your own kind."

"Yes," she answered, a touch of pathos in her clear tones, "I think it is a true bill. Some one once said, in reply to a similar charge, 'The more I know of men, the more I admire dogs.'

Well, that is a little *my* feeling. Horses and dogs are genuine, they never forget a friend ; and if you love them and show it, they will love you back with no reserve, with entire trust, and for yourself alone. A horse is a person to me, and a friend. And I love horses because they are oppressed by men, and unjustly thought of, and often wickedly used. When human creatures—even women—are cruelly dealt with, there is an appeal for them to human tribunals ; but these dumb animals have no appeal save to heaven. And men say they have no souls—most men, at least, say so, especially the parsons—but I know they have. And I pray for them night and morning, and in church, when the pause comes in the prayer, ‘for all those afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate ;’ for I know none so sad or helpless as they. Only those people who have been friends with a horse or with any dumb creature—real good friends, you know—can tell how true and staunch and faithful their memory is for love. You know the beautiful story of Ulysses and his hound. All the world had forgotten the hero save his dog, and he remembered even when his eyes were dim with death, and licked his hand and died, happy to have seen his master once again. You may tell all your heart to your horse or your dog whenever you are in trouble, or grieved or indignant about anything, and he will understand and sympathise with you, and tenderly comfort you, and never betray you. Ah, I have told my horse Nestor lots of things nobody else knows, time after time !”

She checked herself abruptly, sighed a little, then laughed and lowered the *coupé* window. “Look, Mr. Jack, there’s the noble Viscount ; and see—what a beautiful bouquet he has ! That’s for me, of course. I wonder what the guard thinks of my holding a *levée* like this at every station ?”

“Charming weather, Miss Sandhurst, but confoundedly cold ! Let me wish you all the compliments of the festive season .”

Train seems very full to-night ; nice snug *coupé* you have. Thought you were at X., Mr. Burton ;—chaperoning Miss Sandhurst, I see. Congratulate you on your good fortune. Will you allow me to leave you a few flowers, Miss Sandhurst ? I know you like flowers—remember you are a great admirer of roses—heard you say so once or twice. Going to be a hard frost to-night, I fancy. Not many balls on in town now I suppose?"

"Not many. But we shall have a good deal of dancing down here for the next month or two, you know. I daresay I may get a waltz or so to-night."

"Really ? After your journey ? You are really indefatigable ! By the way—see guard going to hold up his hand—musn't forget to ask what it is I can have the pleasure of doing for you ; think you wanted to see me for something or other ? "

"I'm afraid it was only the gratification of having a chat with you, Lord Pinkerville, and of receiving these lovely flowers ;" and burying her pert little nose in the bouquet, Georgie smiled mischievously at her interrogator.

"Upon my word, Miss Sandhurst, you are too overwhelming, too complimentary, you know, I mean. It is unspeakably delightful to find oneself so flatteringly appreciated—above all by your too charming self ! Well, good-bye, *au revoir*."

"How can you say such things, Miss Georgie ?" cried Jack as they glided onward ; "and to a man whom you pretend you don't like !"

"That's just exactly why," she retorted recklessly. "If I cared for him the least bit, of course I should behave as if I didn't."

"But why, in Heaven's name ?"

"Because all girls do," said Georgie, with conviction. "It's a way we have."

Upon which Jack mused a while in silence. Presently he said

"There's only one more station, I think?"

"And two more deputations," answered she. "I was obliged to give them both the same place of rendezvous. They are Fred Forrester and his cousin Harry Fielding."

"And they have both of them 'applied,' as you call it, to Mr. Sandhurst?"

"Not at all. They both 'applied' to me personally, but at different times. And I told both of them the same thing—that I couldn't make up my mind just then. And they both said they'd wait till I did."

"How nice of them! And do they know why you have asked them to meet you this evening?"

"I said I had a parcel to leave on my way for Dolly Forrester, and if they would walk down to the station to meet this train I would give it to them. Here's the parcel; it's a silver locket for Dolly." And she opened a small travelling-bag, and produced thence a little packet tied up with a blue ribbon and inscribed, "With best Christmas wishes to dear Dolly."

"For invention of detail, if not for boldness of design, Miss Georgie, you beat every diplomatic artist it has ever been my fortune to hear of."

"That is a far more handsome compliment than you have paid me yet, Mr. Jack. But now, pray observe, and lend me your 'most considered counsels,' for these are the two likeliest applicants for the vacancy. Why, there's Fred alone; where's Harry? I don't see Harry."

"May there not have been 'pistols for two and coffee for one' ordered on receipt of your double-barrelled invitation? People who play such dangerous games as yours must expect tragic *dénouements* now and then, you know."

"What a nuisance!" she exclaimed peevishly. "Now that puts me all out of my reckoning. And it's just Harry I like best of all!"

"Ye s'ould ha'e told him that before!" sang Jack aggravatingly. "'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour!"

"Do be quiet!" cried Georgie, quite fierce. And putting her head out of the *coupé* window as the train entered the station, "Why; Fred!" she exclaimed, with but scant ceremony, "where's Harry?"

"Merry Christmas, Georgie! It's getting quite dark. I should never have found you out if you hadn't hailed me."

"Merry Christmas to you too, Fred. Here's Jack Burton going home with me. And here's my Christmas present for Dolly. I know she wanted a big silver locket, so I got her one. My love and best wishes with it. But I thought Harry would have been here too."

"Ah, Georgie, I see you don't get the latest telegrams from this populous locality. That silver locket of yours will contain somebody's photograph before it hath been twenty-four hours in my fair sister's possession, else I am content 'to be writ down an ass.'"

"What! Dolly—your cousin Harry!"

"Precisely. The state of the case could not have been more correctly or more succinctly put. My sister Dorothy has pledged herself to become the property of my cousin Harry on the shortest notice consistent with the convenience of certain dress-making and confectionery establishments. And he charged me to say all that was amiable to you on his behalf, and to tell you that Dolly particularly wished him to stay with her this evening to help in the decoration of the rooms, and he had to obey orders."

For a moment Georgie's self-possession seemed hardly equal to the emergency. Jack's eye was on her, and she knew it, and flushed crimson from throat to brow. Then with a visible effort, and lips whose trembling betrayed her emotion, or perhaps her annoyance only,

"Why, this," cried she, "is indeed a surprise! Unless you are joking, Fred?"

"Not a particle of joke in the matter, Georgie; it's a real genuine sale of *bond-fide* articles. But as you sapiently observe, it *is* a surprise, and one of very recent date. The engagement was only announced to *me* yesterday, and the world—that is to say, the county—will probably not be informed of it until after Christmas week. So don't go and let it out prematurely; for Dolly and her young man are deuced shy, and they want to get all the snap-dragon and plum-pudding over before stating the case in public. Well, you're off, I see; shall I meet you to-night?—carpet dance at your place, Burton, and Tom's asked me. Dolly and Harry will come too; but mind, Georgie, and you too, old fellow, mum's the word. Ta-ta till nine o'clock."

And again the train sped on, and the last of Georgie's "candidates" was lost in the fast-gathering gloom of the winter twilight. She leaned back in her seat, silent, and doubtless piqued. Was it *only* pique, Jack wondered, or had she really cared for the recalcitrant Harry? She was candid; it would not, he thought, be difficult to get at the truth. Better to break the pause bravely.

"It's very remiss of me, Miss Georgie, but I have actually quite forgotten to ask the question Fred put to you just now, and which, by the way, you did not answer. *Are you coming to our dance to-night?*"

"Certainly. Didn't I tell Lord Pinkerville that this very evening I should make use of his nosegay?"

"Come," thought Jack, "if she can dance she's not so very hard hit."

"And," continued Georgie, with considerable warmth, "I wouldn't miss going *now* on any account, just to let Mr. Harry know that I have heard of his engagement, and that I don't care a pin!"

"Of course, that's the proper and amiable spirit to show," re-

turned Jack approvingly. "But you see the trampled worm *will* turn occasionally."

"You are odious, with your quotations and proverbs and morals!" cried she, with vehemence. "It's not more than a month since Harry spoke to me last, and begged for an answer. And I said—well, I don't quite remember what, but it was much the same as I had said before, and he ought at least to have waited till I set him free."

"But he was never bound," expostulated Jack, with some reason.

"Well, I don't care. I daresay I should have refused him after all; and I hope Dolly and he will be happy. But he was certainly the nicest in the catalogue. Fred's no good, and I hate all the rest; and I get out at the next station. How dark it is! and so awfully cold too!"

Jack leaned forward and closed the window, which had remained lowered since they left the last station. As he reseated himself a gleam of light from a roadside lamp flashed upon Georgie's face, and he saw her brown eyes were fixed steadfastly on him.

"Georgie, do you remember building sand-houses down by the brook at Longdorne with me when we were children? You were a flirt even then, and I used to suffer terrible pangs of jealousy in consequence of the way in which you *would* carry on with young Hawthorne."

"Yes, Jack; and you and he had a fight about it in the long meadow, and I looked on; and we all had cake and damson wine together afterwards under the big elm. O, I remember it perfectly, and lots of things besides. Are you ever jealous of me now, Jack?"

"Little brazen jade!" thought Jack. "What girl in the world save Georgie would dare ask a man such a question as that under the circumstances?"

But he answered aloud,

"I have no right to be jealous now; and besides, are you not about to dismiss all your admirers?"

"Yes. I shall live and die an old maid. Old maids are often much happier than wives. I shall build a model hospital for poor women, and appoint women physicians to attend them, and institute an Order of Mercy for the better protection of animals, and do lots of things I am always thinking about, and longing to do and to see done. And it will be better far to make the world happier and more human, than to marry some stupid man and do and be what every ordinary housekeeping, stocking-darning married woman does and is all the world over."

"If you married the right man, Georgie, he would take an interest in such things as those you name, and would help you. A man's help is not to be despised in schemes which concern public benefit. Man and wife may do more good works together than a woman could do alone. And she might have both good works and husband's love to brighten her womanhood."

"Yes; but I know no man who would interest himself in these things. Certainly none of those we have seen to-day; except, perhaps, the old General—for my sake, you know. But we thought him *too* old. And there are no more candidates."

"Georgie, there *is* another candidate."

"Another? No, Jack; there were six, and Harry didn't come, and the next station is home."

"The sixth candidate *has* come, Georgie, and is travelling with you. It is your old chum, Jack Burton. Are you going to break my heart now as you did in the old days? Are you determined to wear the white flower all your life?"

## III.

LIGHTS multitudinous gleamed from the windows and poured through the open hall-door of Longdorne Grange. Carriages followed one another in quick succession up the avenue leading to the house, and group after group of youthful figures flitted through the entrance, and clustered about it with laughter and jest and merry greeting.

"But Jack's not home yet," cried a voice. "Where's Jack?"

"He should have been here an hour ago," said his brother Tom. "Can't think what's become of him!"

"Here's Mr. Sandhurst's brougham coming up the drive," exclaimed another voice. "It's Georgie! I'm glad she's home in time for this evening."

"Yes, it's Georgie. And look, that's Jack's head out of the window! He's with her; only fancy!"

The carriage rolled to the door and stopped. Then, pausing only to bestow a nod of familiar recognition on the garrulous spectators, Jack handed Georgie forth, resplendent in white silk and Christmas roses.

"So glad to see you, Georgie! What a lovely bouquet! How did you come to meet Jack? Picked him up on the way? Come into the tea-room. Lovely moonlight night, isn't it?" cried all the voices, in Dutch chorus.

"Jack," said Mrs. Burton, appearing at the tea-room door, "how late you are! We feared you must have missed the train. You'll have no time to dress before snap-dragon. Why, you *are* dressed!" she cried, as her son uncoated himself and appeared in orthodox evening garb.

"It was my fault, dear Mrs. Burton," exclaimed Georgie, pressing through the group at the doorway, and embracing the old lady. "He stopped to take care of me. I came down by

the same train, in the same carriage ; and so we went home together and saw uncle, and Jack changed his things while I dressed, and we came here in the brougham together."

Something in Georgie's eyes—a light unaccustomed, deeper and softer perhaps than hitherto—arrests the mother's attention.

"Together!" she repeats doubtfully ; "you came together? Jack," turning to her son, "Jack, my dear boy——"

But she stops abruptly, and asks no more ; for she sees written on her son's face the announcement for which she has so long waited in vain.

"Mother," he says, taking the girl's hand in his, "I see you have guessed the news already—Georgie has promised to be my wife."

And Mrs. Burton, pleased and proud because Jack is happy, takes the little flirt at once to her heart, and kisses her cordially, without a regretful thought for sober Kate Harries. What matter?

Jack's face says he is more than content, and Georgie's eyes say she is serious ; and on Christmas-eve, with the church-bells swinging and the mistletoe on the wall, and the laughter of boys and girls echoing so gaily through the house, can she have a hard word or a cold look for the girl who is to be *Jack's wife*?

## —'S TELEGRAM.

By NUGENT ROBINSON.

### I.



IN the year 187— I was a “rising junior.” I had luckily inspired a feeling of confidence as to my working capabilities in the flinty bosoms of some three or four solicitors, which led to their giving me such of their business as required an immensity of careful brain-work, and did not demand a very exhaustive pull upon their respective exchequers.

I had been fagging cruelly; sparing myself no amount of labour, shirking no responsi-

; and now the long vacation had come at last, and I was to throw myself upon the purple heather on the mountain or to wander by the brooklet, or to listen to the murmur of the sad sea waves—free and fresh as a schoolboy going home on holidays.

My bosom’s lord sat lightly on its throne, and in addition to the pleasures of my anticipated hours of idleness, I was in a

position to fling aside the swing doors of the London and Westminster Bank with the feeling of one who held a stake in that highly respectable establishment.

I strolled up Oxford Street, with a view of telegraphing to my friend Freddy Corbet, who had implored me to join him *instanter* at the village of Luss on Loch Lomond, where he had pitched his tent for the purpose of "doing" some of the exquisite scenery by which that picturesque hamlet is surrounded. Freddy was then a clerk in the F. O., with a very respectable "screw," which he spent like a man and a brother, in addition to "a couple of mouldy hundreds" allowed him by a maiden aunt, who, up to the hour of her *exit* from the stage of life, laboured under the delusive idea that her nephew ~~was~~ a diplomatist of very distinguished abilities, and to whose ~~secret~~ services the country owed much, if not the entire of its ~~west~~ political influence.

The venerable lady bequeathed to her nephew one thousand a year, and the F. O. saw Freddy Corbet no more.

Freddy and I were fast friends, and we had arranged to spend the long vacation together in such localities, as, upon interchange of opinion and mutual resolve, seemed most suitable to our respective inclinations.

I entered the telegraph office, and found that the compartments were filled; the first by a servant in livery, the second by a portly elderly gentleman who wished it to be known to all comers that he was telegraphing to "my son, Captain Smotsbee, of the 95th," and the third by a young lady, richly but plainly attired, whose figure was simply perfection, and whose golden hair was wound round the back of her graceful head in massive and luxurious plaits.

I felt strongly interested in this girl.

Of course every man of a certain age obeys the impulse which bids him gaze upon a fair face or a faultless form—it is

but Nature's tribute to the beautiful, and in obedience to this mysterious law, I strained eagerly forward to obtain a glimpse of her features, but without success. She was engaged in filling up the telegraph form, and her head was bent over the desk.

"When will this message be forwarded?" she asked in a low and musical voice.

"Can't say, miss; it depends on the number before it," replied the clerk.

"It is important—*very* important."

"It must take its turn."

"How much am I to pay?"

The phlegmatic clerk proceeded to count the words, and announced that the message would cost "Seven and tuppence."

The young lady put her hand to her pocket—started, coloured, became deadly pale, and exclaimed, "I have left my purse on my toilette table, what am I to do?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the clerk, biting the tip of his pencil, "except you go home for it," he added with a grin.

"I live out of town, and the message would be too late; what am I to do?" and in her perplexity she turned and faced me.

My heart rushed up through my hair, and then descended with equal rapidity to the soles of my boots.

She was lovely.

Lustrous violet-blue eyes, and long sweeping lashes—eyes sad yet joyous, bright yet tender. A delicately formed nose, slightly *retroussé*, which imparted a piquancy to the face such as one only sees in a portrait by Greuze. Lips red, ripe, luscious, and a set of brilliant pearly teeth. Her golden hair came low upon her forehead, and she wore a hat surmounted by a rich dark blue feather, which almost swung across her shoulders.

She was not thinking of me, although her eyes met mine. She was gazing beyond me, into the depths of her perplexity.

My voice was scarcely audible as I said, "I beg your pardon, I inadvertently heard your conversation with the clerk: will you permit me to relieve you from any embarrassment by allowing me to pay for the message?" I stuttered and stammered, but nevertheless got through the sentence.

She started as I spoke, and bestowed upon me a haughty glance, almost amounting to defiance.

"We are strangers, sir, and I cannot accept your offer, however courteously meant."



"Excuse me, but I infer that your telegram is of importance, and that time is precious?"

"Time *is* precious," this was uttered like an echo.

"Then surely you are not so firmly bound in the iron fetters of conventionalism as to reject my offer?"

I spoke warmly, for she never relaxed her haughtiness.

"I regret I cannot accept your offer," and she turned from me.

I felt nettled and strongly irritated. A keen sense of injury tingled through me ; I resolved to act. I plunged my hand into my pocket, seized upon three half-crowns, threw them to the clerk, exclaiming, "Send that lady's message," and indulging in a laugh like that of the second ruffian in the melodrama, strode from the office, sprang into a passing hansom, telling the driver to drop me at Charing Cross.

"What an ass !" I muttered to myself as we dashed through the crowded thoroughfare. "What an idiot, to throw seven and sixpence into the air for a mere idea ! Seven and sixpence worth of chivalry. Pshaw ! it was too absurd ;" and then her defiant loveliness smote me, and I meanly rejoiced that I had gained the best of the struggle. I felt elated, triumphant. This haughty woman had smitten down my honest offer with contempt, and I had returned the blow by disarming her. She struck with cold steel, I turned her weapon with my glove. She might be Lady Clara Vere de Vere for aught I knew to the contrary ; but, be she gentle or simple, she was in my debt, and she owed me, in the words of the phlegmatic telegraph clerk, the sum of "Seven and tuppence."

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## II.

I SENT my telegram, and left Euston that evening by the Scotch limited mail.

It was my first visit to the land of Walter Scott, and as I sped onwards towards the country of Rob Roy, I bethought me of my youthful longings to stand, claymore in hand, by the side

of that daring outlaw, and of my tender and passionate love for the wayward and fascinating Diana Vernon.

Heigh-ho !

“ Shadows, my Lord.”

Freddy Corbet met me at Balloch, the romantic outlet of Loch Lomond, looking ruddier than a cherry, browner than a berry, and clad in a nondescript costume, varying between that of a club-lounger and one of those lay figures, supposed to represent Highland chieftains in the garb of their native country, which adorn the entrances to long-established premises sacred to the sale of the soothing weed.

The view of Loch Lomond from Balloch, bathed as I saw it in a sheen of golden splendour, was perfectly entrancing. The broad expanse of bluish-grey water, smooth and glassy as a mirror, Ben Lomond looming upwards, its lofty summit hidden in a white cloud soft as a snow-flake, the emerald upon the surrounding hills, mingled with the delicate tints of the newly blossoming heather—these, with the thickly-wooded islands, reflecting their shadows in apparently unfathomable depths, formed a *coup d'œil* for which I was utterly unprepared, and upon which I gazed with feelings of enthusiastic and unalloyed admiration.

“ You never beheld such a charming digging as I have dropped on,” exclaimed Freddy, after we had exhausted the preliminaries attendant upon such a meeting ; “ all honeysuckle and sunshine, and birds whistling, and a rustic porch over every window, and summer-house at every door, and a landscape at every corner, and pretty girls in profusion, and beer ! such beer !—ah ! ” and he joyously kissed the tips of his fingers, waving them in the direction of our temporary homestead. As we neared the picturesque wooden landing-place, the village of Luss commenced,

“ Like a nymph to the bath addressed,”

to reveal its beauties. Situated in a hollow, and backed by heather-covered hills, it lies encradled in a nest of the rarest and softest verdure—a beautiful suppliant at the feet of its giant captors. Quaint and picturesque villas, covered with graceful creepers, dotted here and there, pertly pop their roofs above the surrounding foliage, like vigilant sentinels from behind the ramparts of a well-defended fortress, while blooming gardens, rich in colour as Aubusson carpets, stretch down to the Loch to be laved and wooed by its transparent and amorous waters. Seen as I beheld it, in the drowsy, dreamy, voluptuous glow of the ripe autumnal sunlight, it was a scene so perfumed with the very essence of the beautiful, that for the moment I felt as though the dust of poor humanity had flown with the four winds of heaven, and that I had entered upon the ecstasies of a new and untasted existence.

Our "digging" was all that Freddy Corbet painted it, giving upon the Loch, and commanding its glorious and varied scenery.

As we sat that evening by the water's edge lazily smoking the calumet of peace, I related to my companion my adventure with "the fair one with the golden locks," which afforded him intense enjoyment.

"Such a duffer!" he exclaimed, when I had concluded. "If you had been in the vicinity of a knacker's yard, every dead horse would have had a kick at you. Why, Charley Bentinck, I used to consider you a blue-bag of sense; but now I shall never see half-a-crown without thinking of my excellent friend Bentinck Bayard, who prowls about telegraph offices for the purpose of paying for the messages of damsels in distress."

Our life at Luss was an enchanting monotony. A plunge in the Loch at seven, breakfast at nine, no letters to read or write (thank heaven), a prolonged smoke, Freddy sketched, I read a

trashy novel, with the full knowledge that it was rubbish of the most uncompromising description, but revelled in its flimsy fiction nevertheless ; and then to the pier to meet the steamers. This act we regarded, in common with the entire population of the village, in the light of a serious duty ; and, be the weather fair or foul, wet or dry, stormy or calm, the arrival of the boat found us at our post like a pair of detectives awaiting the landing of some party telegraphed as " wanted." I may add, by way of confession, that we dressed *d'outrance* for these occasions, invariably giving a finishing touch to our respective toilettes ere we sauntered to the *rendezvous*.

Six weeks had glided away as though I had been in dream-land, and the hour was not far distant which was to summon me to work. The shadow of the City was already upon me.

One exquisite afternoon found us, as usual, on the look-out for the steamer from Balloch. Tourists from all climes under the sun were still passing backwards and forwards through those picturesque regions, and the boats were as crowded, possibly more so, than when I had come up the Loch in the early part of the preceding month.

" I say, Seven and tuppence," exclaimed Freddy—I should mention that since my narration of the telegraph adventure he invariably addressed me by this classical appellation, sometimes varying it to " Seven and two"—" I say, Seven and tuppence, did you ever see such a lot ?—all as ugly as my grandmother's cat. Let's count the women with spectacles."

It may be ungracious, it may be ungallant, it may be unchivalrous, but I am bound to declare that the ladies who " tear round " the Scottish lakes are not of the highest order of female beauty.

" One, two, three, four, five. Hallo ! Seven and two, *there's a* stunning pretty girl ! "

The steamer was getting under way.

"Where?" I listlessly asked.

"There, opposite you."

"With the old gentleman with the white hat?"

"No, stupid! close to the creature in spectacles."

"In a scarlet cloak?"

"Not at all. There, in deep mourning, with the hay-coloured hair."

My heart gave one great throb. It was the girl whom I had encountered at the telegraph office.

The steamer began to move. My first impulse was to jump on board.

My eyes caught hers; she flushed.

The steamer was passing along the jetty.

She spoke rapidly to her companion, a tall, gentlemanlike-looking young man, towards whom, in that single instant, I conceived a deadly aversion.

He quitted her side, and rushing to the extremity of the vessel, shouted to me:

"I wish to get out of your debt, sir. Your name and address, please."

His tone was as though he were addressing a lackey.

The steamer was passing away from the jetty.

"*You* are not in my debt," I cried defiantly.

The steamer had passed from the jetty.

He sprang upon the seat, and rapidly detaching a sealskin purse from his pocket, seized a sovereign, and holding it between his forefinger and thumb, cried:

"Catch. Debt, with interest and thanks."

The steamer was passing away. I did not keep the wicket of the second eleven at Oxford without being able to make a fair catch. I caught the sovereign as it twirled through the air. With all my strength I sent it flying towards him. It

struck him. A savage thrill of pleasure ran through me as I saw him apply a white handkerchief to his face.



The steamer had passed away ; and, in spite of all my fierce determination to kill the thought ere it could burst into blossom, my heart's longings were with that fair girl who was being borne from me, whither I could not tell.

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### III.

AT my suggestion, Freddy Corbet and I started next morning for a short excursion across the Loch to Inversnaid, on to Stranachlacher, down Loch Katrine, through the Trossachs, and *via* Callendar to Edinburgh. I traced her to Callendar ; but

here I was brought to a standstill. I assumed, not unreasonably, that she would visit the Scottish capital, as Glasgow afforded but little of interest to any traveller, save, perhaps, a commercial one. We put up, in the modern Athens, at the Queen's Hotel, where I cross-examined the waiters as to the personal appearance of the lady visitors, as though they were being tried for their respective liberties and lives. It was childish this, weak, stupid, and silly. What was the haughty beauty to me? what sympathy between us? None, save an act upon my part for which a newly-breeched schoolboy would scout me. Her husband, too! Strange to say, I never for an instant admitted the possibility of her being united to *that* man. Whenever the thought came to the surface I did not give it breathing time, but sent it down to the unfathomable depths of undefined idea. Yet the chase, if I may call it, possessed a strange fascination for me; and I followed up the slightest clue with the eagerness of an amateur detective.

At Holyrood, on the very spot where the ruthless assassins flung the quivering body of the ill-fated Rizzio, a low, musical voice startled me. For an instant I could not summon sufficient resolution to turn round. *Ay de mi alhama!*

The voice, though low and sweet, and "of the purple," was attached to a dumpy little lady, as broad as she was long, who wore cork-screw curls, and whose nose led the unruly imagination straight to the idea that she loved gentle stimulants "not wisely, but too well."

I hung about Holyrood for two days, cozening myself into the belief that my sympathy for the ill-fortune of the beautiful Queen of Scots and the luckless, chivalrous Charles Edward was the immediate cause of my dalliance; and there is a probability that I should have tarried under the same specious mental pretext for a considerably longer period, had not Freddy Corbet announced his intention of "doing" the Iona, which meant a trip



to Ardrishag and back through the Kyles of Bute, on board the most remarkable steamer afloat upon European waters.

We "did" the Iona and the Kyles of Bute, and Ardrishag, and revelled in the beauties of the ever-varying scenery, returning by the same route to Glasgow, and back to our Highland home; but of the fair unknown I had no further sign or token.

"A letter for you, sir," said our landlady, handing me a square envelope, with a monogram in scarlet and gold. The superscription was in an unknown female hand. I hesitated before opening it. It must be from *her*.

I studied the monogram; but, like unto the majority of those facetious epistolary adornments, it was as undecipherable as the hieroglyphics upon the exterior of a tea-chest.

The letter ran thus:—

"Miss Chandos begs to thank Mr. Bentinck" (it was from *her*) "for his great kindness in saving her poodle from drowning in the Loch on Thursday last."

"Pshaw!"

We broke up our little establishment, engaged the same apartments provisionally for the following July, August, and September, and bade adieu to Loch Lomond. Freddy Corbet started for Italy, and I set out for Dublin, to visit some Irish friends, with whom I passed the remaining few days of my vacation.

While sojourning with them, I received a telegram from Mr. Chadd, the senior partner of the firm of Chadd, Twiss, and Webster, requesting my attendance in London upon the following day, if possible, for a consultation upon a very important case in which I had the pleasure of being retained.

The single hair had broken. The Damoclean sword of work had fallen upon me.

I started that evening from Kingstown by the seven o'clock boat, reaching Holyhead at midnight. It was a cold and cheerless night, and I was anxious to secure a compartment in the wild Irish mail, roll myself up like an Esquimaux, and take a good honest sleep, of which I was in sore need, as my hospitable hosts had given a succession of revelries in my honour, which led to a complication of hours inimical in the highest degree to the best and most vital interests of the drowsy god.

Having "tipped" the guard, secured sticks, *alias* two broad laths, upon which to deposit an extra cushion, so as to form a bed, and requesting him not to disturb me at Chester, I turned in for the night; and remember nothing except a hoarse shriek and terrific crash, as we rushed through the iron tube across the Menai Straits.

"Ticket, please, sir."

I was half asleep, the carriage lamp had gone out, and the guard's lantern flashed in my blinking eyes.

"Where are we?"

"Rugby, sir."

I handed him my ticket.

"You'll want the lamp lighted, sir?"

"Leave it as it is;" and I re-rolled myself into a shapeless mass of railway rug.

"Quick, ladies! jump in! the only seats in the train. We are very full this morning, and we're late," cried the guard, as he thrust two females into the carriage—a lady and her maid.

My *dévoir*, as a gentleman, was to apologise for my recumbent position, and surrender my extra cushion. I resolved to



feign sleep, and thus avoid the "bother" (I like that word) of disturbing myself.

"Mocking is catching," is an old and a very wise saw. I slept like a dormouse.

It was bright daylight when the guard shook me up.

"Please to let the ladies pass, sir."

My fellow-travellers were standing, anxious, like Mr. Sterne's starling, to get out: my sticks blocked the way. I rolled off the improvised couch, muttered an apology, and stepped upon the platform.

Mr. Chadd was waiting for me.

"Jump into this hansom at once; we have only ten minutes to see Serjeant Hopkins, as he goes by the 8.30 from Paddington. My man will look after your traps."

I preceded him into the vehicle.

"Drive, as fast as you can, to No. 298, Harley Street—double fare!" cried Mr. Chadd.

As we quitted the yard we passed an elegantly-appointed brougham turning in an opposite direction, containing my late fellow-travellers. A rapid glance apprized me that one of them was the girl whom I had met at the telegraph office.

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#### IV.

My holidays had passed away, and my work was upon me. Letters to be replied to, papers to be hunted up, appointments to be made, law books to be consulted, opinions to be given, and every pigeon-hole of my waking existence crammed to the utmost limits of its endurance.

Bitterly I reviled the ill-fortune that closed my eyelids in the wild Irish mail; bitterly the ill-luck that forced me into a corner beneath the bony knuckles of Time; bitterly the mocking destiny that dashed the cup from my lips, when thrice the brimming nectar was presented to them.

My work was heavy, and demanded an untiring vigilance.

My work stood between me and *her* image, thrusting it aside with an iron and unswerving hand.

'Twas a murky, drizzly morning in December upon the eve of the Christmas holidays. I had not even had the pleasing gratification of seeing my bed on the preceding night, as I had been reading up a case which involved a series of most important issues, and was compelled, *bon gré, mal gré*, to surrender my night's rest in the interests of my clients, and I may fairly add of my own, as I had deferred studying my brief under the impression that the case would not come on until after the recess.

It was a disputed will case, and I was retained for the defendants.

Miss Alice Linsaye died in the preceding August, bequeath ing the bulk of her vast property to her nephew and niece, the children of a deceased sister, and a comparatively small residue to a sole surviving brother, who now disputed the will on the grounds of undue influence, and the mental incapacity of the testatrix. On our part it was alleged that the testatrix was of sound mind at the time of her demise, and that the bequests were the result of natural affection, and that she was further influenced by the fact that the plaintiff was extremely wealthy, and unmarried.

There were two weak places in our armour : the first, that Miss Linsaye had been estranged from her nephew up to within a few days of her death ; the second, that Miss Linsaye was generally considered somewhat eccentric.

Her nephew, Mr. Geoffrey Chetwynde, had married "a penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree," contrary to the expressed wishes of his aunt ; and it was solely owing to the influence of his sister Maude, that he was restored, at the eleventh hour, to the sunshine of the good graces of his offended relative.

It was late when I reached the court ; and in addition to

my brief, I was encumbered with a ghastly headache, which at every throb led me to imagine that my skull was in imminent danger of exploding into several small pieces, like a Shrapnel shell.

The plaintiff had a cloud of witnesses in attendance, and the case excited a considerable amount of interest.

The plaintiff's case was ably and eloquently stated by his counsel, and about twenty persons who had been on terms of alleged intimacy with the deceased were examined as to her eccentricities, and her visibly decaying mental powers, antecedent to her demise.

My leader cross-examined such of these witnesses as he deemed shaky, and by dint of a series of artful and elaborate queries totally irrelevant to the question at issue, succeeded in driving a considerable number of them into a state of mental irritation bordering upon frenzy, and the remainder into a condition of hopeless and irrevocable bewilderment.

When he had duly impressed the jury with the conviction that the individuals who had appeared before them were each and all possessed of a natural taste for perjury, he proceeded to state the case for the defence, and in a brief but incisive statement painted the conduct of the plaintiff in such hideous colours as scarcely to demand the tears of a solitary angel to wipe the record out.

If our case was burdened with weak points, it likewise bristled with strong ones ; and one upon which we placed an unlimited confidence was the fact of the deceased lady's having telegraphed to her nephew, a few days prior to her demise, to come to her and receive her unqualified forgiveness. The substance of the telegram was written by herself, copied by her niece, transmitted by the latter to Geoffrey Chetwynde, who acted upon it *instanter*.

The existence of this telegram was questioned. By a piece of

good luck, the original in the handwriting of Miss Lindsaye had been preserved, and with a cool, but self-satisfied demeanour my leader rose and said, "We'll examine Miss Chetwynde now my Lud;" and, turning to me, "You take her up, Bentinck I'll hold myself in reserve."

Up to this particular moment I had preserved a master inactivity; my head was splitting, and my ideas were deranged by the tortures of physical anguish. I would willingly have given twenty, yea, fifty guineas for a respite, but the chance was too good to throw away; I could not afford to lose the opportunity, so by a vigorous effort I drew myself together, and jerking my wig well over my forehead, and adjusting my gown with the stereotyped "pluck" peculiar to the profession, and glancing rapidly at the marginal notes on my brief, I turned towards the witness-box, and, blinded with pain, drawled:

" You are, I believe, Miss Maude Chetwynde ? "

" I am."

" Niece of the late Miss Alice Lindsaye ? "

" Yes."

" You recollect Tuesday, the 5th of August last ? "

" Perfectly."

" You are acquainted with the handwriting of the deceased ? "

" Intimately."

" You recollect sending a telegram to your brother, to Paris on the 5th of August ? "

" I do."

" At the request of your aunt ? "

" Yes ; she wrote the substance of it."

" Will you have the goodness to inform me if you have seen this document before ? "

She was handed the slip of note paper, and, raising her veil—

The court swung round me—

Maude Chetwynde held the telegram in her hands for which I had paid seven shillings and twopence !



\* \* \* \*

Apropos of telegrams, I despatched one this morning, of which the following is a copy :

*"From*  
Charles Bentinck.

*To*  
Mrs. Bentinck,  
Bunlossie,  
Luss, Loch Lomond.

" Your brother Geoffrey and I leave by the 8.50 this evening, Freddy Corbet comes with us. We will reach Balloch at 12 to-morrow. Bring the children down to Balloch to meet us."

## MARRIED BY ACCIDENT.

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DICK OSBORNE was not exactly fortunate in his university career, which is a euphemism for saying that it was precisely the reverse. He spent all his money, he wasted all his time, he was reprimanded, he was rusticated, he was plucked. It became an open question in the mind of Richard whether he should enlist in the army or drive a hansom. Fortunately a third course was indicated to him by a friend—he might turn private tutor. I once heard of a man who was on the verge of bankruptcy, but was saved from it by the following ingenious plan: he advertised for pupils at three hundred a year, and got a dozen of them. People thought that if such a price was asked something exceptionally good in the educational line must surely be imparted.

An advertisement, which a friend of Dick's brought to him, stated that a private tutor was wanted to prepare a young gentleman for matriculation and the previous examination at an English university. Now it was quite true that Dick Osborne had been ploughed for "Greats," but then nobody could deny that he had passed prosperously through "Smalls." The fact that he had been ploughed for "Greats" was not one which he was bound to obtrude upon public attention. The decision of the matter virtually rested with the young gentleman himself, who, being greatly pleased with some traits in Dick's character which had not been equally pleasing to Dick's academic

superiors, insisted on having Mr. Osborne, and nobody else, for his private tutor. It was true that Dick knew next to nothing, but, as his pupil knew absolutely nothing, the mental superiority ultimately rested with Dick.

The tutor and pupil went down to Wingfield Hall. The odd thing was that Wingfield Hall did not belong to the pupil, but to his sister. The brother had a hall of his own with ever so much shooting, but being a minor it was let off to some Leeds manufacturer. The father had married a lady with a large landed estate, which was settled on the younger children of the marriage. There was only one child, a girl, who became an heiress, as her mother had been an heiress before her. It was of course only very gradually that the exact bearings of things became known to young Osborne. I must also do him the justice to say that when the fact became known to Mr. Osborne, instead of stimulating any tendency in the direction of heiress-hunting, it had a directly contrary effect. Dick rightly considered that grapes of this kind hung a good deal beyond his reach, and that it would be better for him to limit himself to the legitimate enjoyments of his surroundings; for his lines had certainly fallen to him in pleasant places. His pupil was a very backward delicate lad; and as he had the faculty of forgetting everything as fast as he learned it, no early date could be assigned to the termination of Mr. Osborne's services. He had already continued at Wingfield Hall for a twelvemonth when certain circumstances arose which I am about to relate.

The real mistress of the Hall was hardly its nominal mistress; for an active aunt bore sway, and had done so for years. Lucy Harlowe was a quiet, imaginative, retiring, simple-hearted girl, who, wrapt up in her own quiet ways and accustomed to leave everything to her energetic and self-asserting aunt, against whose yoke, however, she occasionally felt inclined to rebel, hardly asserted or even realised her true position. A gentleman

is almost a necessity in a household, and, beyond his tutorial duties, Mr. Osborne made himself useful in a variety of ways which were sources of interest and occupation to himself. He looked after the horses, he kept the gardener and coachman in order, he had a keen eye for plantations and preserves, and in company with his pupil he did a good deal of fishing and shooting. Indeed these were very properly regarded as essential points in young Harlowe's education, as peculiarly adapted to fit him for that future destiny in life which he was intended to adorn.

So Dick was quiet, harmless, and happy as a general rule, though a little weak-brained, as might be conjectured from his history, and with a whole store of susceptibilities and sensitivenesses. His natural tendency would have been to flirt with Lucy Harlowe, whom he really liked very much ; but he had spent his little all, and looked with dismay on any chance that would drive him from his warm corner into the cold of the outer world. In the shooting season various gentlemen came to join in the Wingfield shootings ; for the aunt rightly considered that the society of country gentlemen was a proper thing for her nephew, and would probably provide a befitting husband for her niece. The aunt, with all her imperiousness, was an honest woman, and wished to do her duty according to her lights. The gentlemen came, two gentlemen especially, Squire Dorrington and Major Fitzpatrick, who liked the shooting, the lunch in the preserves, the late dinner. They were rather puzzled and jealous about Dick Osborne's position in the neighbourhood. He was only the tutor ; but then all in the neighbourhood had discovered that he was something more besides. These gentlemen had found out that Osborne was a simple-hearted fellow, and had resolved to "draw" him for their own behoof and satisfaction.

They were two very artful men, the Major and the Squire.

They sat in the smoking-room, going in respectively for sherry-and-seltzer and for brandy-and-soda. The pupil, not over strong, had been ordered to bed by the aunt hours before.

They were both of them clever gentlemanly fellows in their way, and Dick could not help feeling a kind of awe of them. They were handsome, he was not ; clever, he was not ; dressed in the very best style, he was not ; thoroughly men of the world, he was not ; plenty of money in their pockets, which was certainly not the case with him. They made him partake of the brandy-and-soda, they made him partake of the sherry-and-seltzer. Dick became slightly excited. His imagination took a broader range.

" You're very much in clover here, Mr. Richard Osborne," said the Major.

" It does very well for a stop-gap," answered Mr. Richard. " I must do something till I can take my degree and get called to the bar."

This was Osborne's professed object in life, but he was himself giving up belief in it.

" You're a clever dog," said the Major.

" And he's a deep dog, too," said the Squire. " What a capital plan for a fellow to get shut up with Lucy Harlowe, to pretend to be a tutor to her brother ! Why that gives you an opportunity of seeing her every day of your life ! What wouldn't some of us give to have a chance like that ? "

Dick was astonished to hear such deep designs imputed to him. He felt that it was something like profanation, however, that such a conversation should go on in the sanctuary of that home. He admired her, but he admired her like the Victoria Regia in the conservatory pond, or the vesper star at an immeasurable distance beyond sea and air.

He hastened to assure his new friends of the perfect rectitude and straightforwardness of his views and intentions.

"But it would be very nice if you could come in and hang up your hat in the hall as the master of everything—the house and the grounds and the young lady."

In this remark the metropolitan Major was only reproducing his own state of mind. He was tired of those small rooms in Jermyn-street, though backed up with a couple of clubs. It would be very sweet to have a *pied à terre* in the country, especially if it took the shape of a real hall with a rent-roll of three good farms to back it.

The Squire had his estate, but only a squire can understand the loveliness of annexing the next estate and enclosing them both in a ring-fence. The joy of annexing the young woman would be nothing in comparison.

"Have you ever tried it on with her?" said the Major. "Ah, Mr. Dick, Mr. Dick Osborne, you are a deep fellow! You university men know how to get on with the ladies. You beat us Rag-and-Famish fellows hollow."

Dick blushed a radiant blush. The character of a deep dog was one by no means to be despised.

"Well, I say just what I think," said the Squire. "She's a very nice young woman, and any fellow might do worse than be tied up to her, especially when Wingfield Hall is to be part of the bargain."

Dick thought she certainly was a nice young woman, one of the nicest ladies whom he had ever meet in his career. To give him his due, he really thought more of the young lady than he did of the old hall.

A notion was put into Dick's honest head which had never deliberately found place there before. He thought it would be very nice to fall in love with Lucy Harlowe. That might be agreed on all hands. Great swells as might be the Squire and the Major, they could not make a better match. His cheek tingled at the thought of such a match. But however easy it

might be to fall in love with Lucy, the difficulty remained of making Lucy fall in love with him.

"The fact of it is," said the designing Major, who liked nothing better than to befool a fellow and play a practical joke, a taste derived from early army days,—"the fact of it is that the girl's half spoony on you already. Don't you think so, Dorrington?" he asked his neighbour.

Dorrington caught the cue at once.

"Think it!" he exclaimed; "why, to any fellow who knows a bit of life, the thing is as plain as a pikestaff. I have seen something of that sort of thing in my time, and nobody could mistake it."

Now both the Squire and the Major had some touch of selfishness at the bottom of this chaff. When a man is his own centre of the universe (and this is so with most of us), it is impossible that the case should be otherwise. The Major had seriously determined that he would have a "go in" for the heiress. But he had the wit to keep his own counsel from both the other men. The idea began to loom before his eyes that he would get Dick Osborne to propose, if he could. That Dick could possibly be accepted did not enter his mind for a moment. He made no doubt that Dick would be turned out of the house at once. Serve him right for his impudence. That Dick might be utterly ruined formed no part of his calculations. The Major knew that there was danger in proximity, and he thought he would remove the young gentleman, of whose presence he greatly disapproved.

Mr. Dorrington had also his ideas. He had truly interpreted the Major's wink, and thought he saw his way into a practical joke. When the young lady had thrown off a rubbishy proposal, she would better be able to appreciate a proposal of the right sort.

In poetry and fiction we have memorable instances of tutors

marrying heiresses. This is the case in Currer Bell's *Shirley*. This is the case in Mrs. Browning's *Lady Geraldine*. I do not know if honest Richard Osborne was acquainted with these precedents. They might have given him a gleam of encouragement. But I suppose these things happen much more frequently in fable than in reality. Dick might have been ready enough to propose if he had the least tangible basis to go upon.

"The fact of the matter is, Mr. Osborne," said the Major, "you're afraid."

Now Dick Osborne belonged to just that bull-dog order of Englishmen to whom the words "You're afraid," especially when coming from a military man, who is supposed to be afraid of nothing, are simply maddening.

"You can't deny that you're fond of the young woman," said the Squire judicially, lighting up his cigar.

Dick hardly knew his own mind; but he did not venture to deny the soft impeachment.

"Then why don't you tell her so, like a man? I am afraid the Major's about right when he says you're afraid."

"I shouldn't mind making her an offer if I had made up my mind to do it," said Dick.

"Lay you a pony you don't do anything of the sort, and that's twenty-five skiv."

"Done with you," said Dick.

I am afraid there was a mixture of motives; bravado, a false shame of not shrinking from a money bet, and perhaps some allowance for soda-and-brandy, might be among the elements of this sudden determination.

Accordingly Dick sat down to concoct his letter. His friends would have given him every assistance, but on this occasion he decided to trust entirely to his own swimming, and not to any corks or bladders that might be devised for him. Thus he wrote:





"TAKE CARE TO PUT IT ON HER DRESSING TABLE," SAID THE MAJOR.  
II. 237.

"Dear Miss Harlowe, or rather dearest Miss Harlowe, if you will allow me to say so,—Although I am only a poor man, and your brother's tutor, I am a human being, and cannot help falling in love with you. My family is as old a family as any, and at school and college I was thought as good a fellow as any other. I think I could make you happy. I would strive very hard to do so. So will you marry

" RICHARD OSBORNE."

Dick thought this way of finishing was a great literary masterstroke. He was very shy of showing the letter to the two men, but they insisted that on the terms of the bet they had a clear right to see that a direct intelligible offer was really made. So Osborne showed them the last line, which was of course sufficient for all practical purposes.

"That's all straight," said one man.

"That's the direct tip," said the other.

The next question that arose was, how was the letter to be delivered? and how was it to be clearly ascertained that it had been delivered? But just at this moment there was a light step by the door, which being a little ajar disclosed the lithe figure of Florence, the handsome lady's-maid.

"O Florence, you're wanted here. There's something for you to do," said the Major. "Mr. Osborne will tell you what it is."

Florence came demurely into the room, not unwilling to obtain some little portion of admiration from the three gentlemen. Such is the nature of Florences.

"It is only something that I have to give Miss Harlowe. Please let her have it."

"Take care to put it on her dressing-table, that she may find it when she goes to bed," said the Major.

Florence stretched out her hand for a letter or parcel, or anything else that the article might be; but Richard Osborne

felt wonderfully reluctant to give it up. He felt like a man ~~w~~ho was about to clear a chasm or leap from the rock into the sea—

"Out with it, old man," said the Major.

"The longer you look at it, the less you'll like it," said ~~t~~he other.

A neglected poet of the last century has spoken of a hero

"Who, without *buts* or *ifs*,  
Jump'd into the sea from off the cliffs."

But Dick was not that hero. The whole enormity of that proceeding came vividly before his mind. He had far better ~~lose~~ those twenty-five sovereigns. Yes, he could touch his quarter's stipend, and it would be that exactly. What, then, about ~~the~~ the outlying "tics"? For I need hardly say that Dick was just ~~the~~ the sort of good fellow who lives in a chronic state of outlying tics. With the receipt of the quarter's stipend he would bid farewell to any further quarterly stipends, at least from this source. Above all, what would be Miss Harlowe's feelings if she ever learned that she had thus been made the subject of a bet of this sort?

He had handed forth the fatal letter in an irresolute way. The Major had quickly caught it from his grasp and given it to the waiting-maid.

"Here, Florence; look sharp and take it up-stairs, and lay it on the dressing-table."

Florence saw there was some fun going. She gave a laugh of glee, and bounded up-stairs. Richard rose from his seat and bounded after her. Then the squire caught hold of his coat-tail. The coat-tail might probably have given way, but the Major laid firm grasp upon his arm. In the mean time Florence entered her mistress's room, and, just showing herself on the top of the staircase, disappeared in the *penetralia* of the mansion.

"Poor Richard"—for he might well appropriate to himself

the title of that historical personage—felt positively sick and ill. He was not sorry when the Major and the Squire, with all sorts of grins and grimaces, took their leave for the night.

Poor Dick could hardly rest. He took a turn in the grounds, threading the shrubbery and pacing the lawn. He watched the light in her room ; he watched her figure moving before the blind. At last the light was extinguished and he went indoors. He went indoors, but not to sleep ; he tossed about restlessly. He really thought that he had done for himself. He must bid adieu to the very comfortable quarters where he was so pleasantly ensconced from the cares of life. But I must do Dick the justice of saying that this was not the primary consideration. Dick had worked himself into a sort of fever. He was seriously in love, or thought he was seriously in love. For the first and last time in his life he began to compose some poetry. It is a curious psychological fact that the love-fever quickens the mind, and makes dull people quite intellectual for the time being. Theirs is a constant repetition of the fable of Cymon and Iphigenia. Cymon wrote in that thorough state of despair which is so congenial for the production of poetry.

“The meanest hind that ploughs the lea  
To-night is crown’d in dreams of bliss ;  
But love’s bright gaze is not for me,  
And not for me affection’s kiss.

“Enough that I alone should sigh,  
And muse o’er pleasures banish’d past,  
And watch with an unquiet eye  
Till the grey sky is flush’d at last.”

These are some of the very egotistical lines. They are not so very bad, I am inclined to maintain ; but then, Dick threw into this one supreme effort all the poetry of a life-time.

The two gentlemen had bedrooms that night at the Hall. The party assembled at a late breakfast next morning, and one

or two slightly curious glances were interchanged between the Major and the Squire. Lucy Harlowe retained, however, her usual quiet impassive attitude, except that perhaps her dark eyelashes shaded her cheek a little more demurely than usual. The visitors, after their breakfast, smoked their cigars, and dawdled about the kennels, and then rode off in different directions. Richard Osborne kept himself extremely quiet that day, and applied himself to his pupil with great assiduity. The thought occurred to him, should he write a note and recollect that former one, and beg pardon, and ask that the whole matter of his unfortunate mistake should be buried in oblivion? But somehow Dick resolved that this should not be the case. He had crossed the Rubicon, he had burned his boats, he had dared the giddy leap, he had trusted his last coin to the throw of the dice, he had done whatever is most desperate in the annals of desperation. He would wait quietly. It was not often that he was left alone with the young lady, for that chaperoning aunt was vigilant enough. But the chance would come, and indeed at any moment Florence the waiting-maid might bring him a note in answer to his own.

He did not have long to wait. The chance soon came. The aunt was not coming down to dinner. She was rather fatigued with entertaining visitors, and had slightly over-eaten herself with very high game. So Dick found himself alone in the drawing-room, in the mixed lights of twilight and firelight. To him enters Lucy, who goes straight up to him and lays her hand on his, and looks earnestly, at him, and says:

“Richard—Mr. Osborne—did you really mean that letter?”

The moment of moments was come! Richard Osborne threw to the winds any thought of backing out of the transaction.

“I do indeed, Lucy; I cannot help myself. I love you with all my heart.”

“O Richard,” said the girl, “you are so kind and good a—”

clever. It is very silly of me, but I could not help thinking a good deal of you for a long time."

It is unnecessary to carry on the conversation beyond this point. Things were manifestly tending in one direction. The aunt did not quite like it, but Miss Harlowe was her own mistress; and the aunt thought it judicious to give way. When the engagement was made public, the Major sent his cheque for twenty-five pounds to Dick Osborne, and it came in handy.

"How on earth did such a girl as Lucy Harlowe manage to accept Dick Osborne?" So asked the Major and the Squire, with deep feelings of indignation; and so have asked many others. It is one of those things which no fellow can understand. Though the Major paid the twenty-five pounds honourably, it was one of the bitterest pills which he ever had to swallow. Certainly Mr. Richard Osborne gained considerably by the transaction; but he made a good husband, a good father a good squire, and finally a good member of parliament.

Squire Dorrington is married now. I am afraid that his wife has told the wife of Squire Osborne all about the matter of the bet. Also I am afraid that, though nominally the best of neighbours, Squire Dorrington voted against Squire Osborne at the last general election under the cover of the ballot.



## A FRENCH EXPERIENCE.

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"**B**UT French girls are so doosid slow to talk to!"

Dolly Crawfurd, a little shrouded figure sitting on the flabby deck of a plunging Channel steamer, heard the withering dictum of this announcement, and raised her eyes to take a considerative look at the speaker. It was a tall limp young man, with weak whiskers and undecided shoulders, who was standing near her, chewing the end of a dog's head walking stick; and the remark was addressed to a most pronounced specimen of the English school of fast young lady, who—tall, straight as a grenadier, erect and lanky, in brownish ulster and Cambridge hat, likewise chewing the end of *her* walking-stick—looked considerably the more mannish of the two. You may see hundreds of such young women—worse luck!—on any given Channel steamer you choose to travel by; you may meet them—more's the pity!—at any railway station or hotel at home or abroad; you may run against fifties of them—alas!—in any known quarter of Europe or America—nay, even Asia and Africa too, for aught I know—such is the alarming increase of the genus in these perplexing days of the Woman Question. They seem, I grieve to say, as the type of all that is startling and *pas comme il faut* to their continental sisters; they certainly are the abhorrence and avoidance of

the more right-minded of their own ; and as for the opinion of men——

Dolly Crawfurd, I say, listening to the appalling ultimatum above recorded, wondered in her mind whether she too would soon be obliged to indorse young Oxford's observation ; for she is on her way to spend some time among the very class so maligned. She has four young brothers and sisters at home, and a not over-strong widowed mother. She is full of the determination to learn as much French as she possibly can in return for her own English, as then she will be able perhaps to enter on a remunerative engagement on her return. She has heard, through friends, of a desirable French family willing to receive her ; and she is now on her way, a little nervous and trembling, it must be confessed, to enter it.

Dolly is twenty-two years of age, and not what would be called exactly pretty, perhaps, though very "taking" in her own little round caressing way ; but she is considered quite capable enough to fight her own way alone in the world, though it must be confessed she would give anything at this moment not to be forced by circumstances to do it. However, as every one says, it is nothing very formidable—only to teach English to and companionise a girl of her own age, an only daughter and an heiress, living in a pretty town in Normandy ; and many girls would jump at such a chance. Dolly's spirit did "jump" at it —only, as I said, her flesh was a little fearful : but she will get over that. To distract her thoughts she further observes the two in front of her.

"How do you mean ?" asks the Cambridge hat, in answer to Oxford's late remark, as it fixes a penetrating "Don't-take-me-in" sort of eye upon its companion, wheeling round upon him on one heel to do so.

"Why, don't you know ? they haven't got two ideas of their own, or so you'd think, at any rate ; but see them afterwards,

some time when mamma's back is turned, and, O my! don't they flirt their heads off just! Now, give me a jolly downright sort of English girl, who says what she means, and then, you know, you know what you're about."

"Hum, is that your own experience, Charley? Do the French young ladies fire away on you, then? Shouldn't I like to ~~see~~ them!"

Oxford frames his mouth into a dubious expression intended to convey much or anything, and looks away with simpering eye over the billowy expanse of churning waters with modest deprecation. It is not for *him* to boast of Parisian eyes of favour; and, after all, is he not speaking to a simple English girl? He turns the conversation.

"I say, Bessy, aren't you rather hungry? Wouldn't you like a chop or some oysters, or something?"

"Oysters! No, I should think not! If you want anything, go down and get it! I want a constitutional!" So saying, Cambridge thrusts her cane under one arm, and, burying both hands in capacious pockets, turns to walk up and down the deck with vigorous action.

Dolly detaches her attention to other quarters.

Two or three limp and lanky young ladies are seated huddled together in shawls and waterproofs afar off; a few stout papas and mammas are reducing refractory children to order; five or six elderly young ladies (evidently literary) are studiously buried in periodical literature; three bearded ulstered bachelors smoke like cigars on the hurricane-deck. Dolly soon gets tired of it all, and, if it must be confessed, also a little queer. She is no heroine, this young person, and so retires down-stairs to try to forget her woes in sleep. Six or seven hours pass thus; when a tremendous bumping and thumping of heavy articles overhead and ringing and clanking of chains announce the arrival at port. The horrible thud-thud of those tiresome engines

ceases, steps hurry overhead, hoarse calls in French and English are exchanged, and lo, the channel voyage is over.

"Ere we are, miss," announces the friendly stewardess, popping her head in at the door. " You had better come up on deck." It is the last English voice Dolly hears, for as she ascends on deck, lo, she is in a new world. A motley crowd is assembled on the pier to watch the landing. Lively swearing porters in light-blue trowsers, with sunburnt faces, and black moustaches whose heavy sweeping curves would not disgrace the most elegant of our cavalry officers—who does not know the difference between a French and English moustache?—pour down upon them, and, after the fussy ordeal of the gendarmes is fairly over, deftly pick up the luggage, and deposit it, with many gesticulations, on the various vehicles. The stout papas brandish umbrellas and get purple in the face under the effort to make those confounded fellows understand their destinations; the stout mammas, as well as the preservation from a watery death of six out of the eight children will allow them, kindly bring to bear the aid of female and British eloquence; the limp young ladies, each in an ulster and capacious hat at the back of her head, place flat thin feet on the causeway and skip ashore; the bearded bachelors throw away cigar ends and languidly follow.

Dolly, if she had had the experience of six months later, if she could have viewed this scene with eyes made clear by the needle-like incision of French vision, would have laughed heartily at the complete picture of this most "English" company; as it was, tired and a little lonely, she had only energy to pack herself away in a corner of the huge omnibus, and direct them to take her to the railway station as soon as possible. There in due course she arrived, having only been charged seventy-five centimes too much for her one little box and self—but *que voulez-vous?* *c'est une Anglaise;* and in five minutes more was



speeding along through a softly rich country, the abode of fertility and peace, towards her destination.

In about another hour it was reached. Ten minutes more and she is rattling along high, narrow, irregular streets; past funny-looking little shops, which she afterwards discovered contain the very gem and acme of taste in their various commodities; up a straight formal road, bordered with little toy elm-trees, and between every two the railed *grille* of a shut-in mansion,—up this road, I say, for fifty yards, and then, clack! the vehicle stops short, the driver jumps down, opens the door,

and prays Madame to descend. Poor little Madame does so, and gazes in a bewildered sort of way at the ironwork huge door in the wall, through the interstices of which a paved court filled with greenery is visible. The driver pulls a bell, is paid his fee (double), and drives off just as the big door opens and the *bonne* arrives. A French *bonne*! Who does not know that perfection in maids (to look at) which those words conjure up? Black-eyed, rosy, smiling, with neat hair smoothed away under the crimped and spotless "bonnet," the loose jacket, the black-stuff petticoat, the snowy apron, and the sunbeam smile—all these return to me and to many at the name. Eugénie hopes Mademoiselle "is not too fatigued? *Dieu, que c'est un long voyage!* but she must be well tired;" and so chattering conducts her through the green court in at the hall-door, where all is spotless purity and *cireé* barrenness. François is sent to fetch the box.

At the noise, the stir of their arrival, the parlour-door opens, and a sallow-faced black-haired fashionable lady of about forty-five presents herself; behind her a stout gentleman with a red face and white moustache; behind him again a tall young lady in faultless black costume. All three are immensely polite and welcoming. Madame takes her hand, and, drawing her into the *salon*, seats her next the fire; Monsieur places a footstool, and is sure she must be tired, very; Mademoiselle looks sympathetic, but says little. Dolly is tired and exhausted and hungry; and it is a fearful effort to her to respond to all this palaver and amiability. She can hardly speak any French either, which is very embarrassing, and it is so stupid to keep on smiling and saying, "Non, O non, merci," or else, "Oui, Madame," *ad nauseam*. Seeing this dilemma, Monsieur gallantly throws himself into the breach.

"I not speak Inglisch much, Miss," he observes, bowing and throwing open his hands before a very large black-silk waistcoat;

"but I speak it one leetle. I most 'appy to speak it you always."

Dolly thanks him and tries to feel as grateful as the obligation demands. Before the day is over she has reason to thank heaven that the other members of the family do not share the paternal accomplishment, for the floodgates once-set open, the old gentleman's obligingness on that head knows no bounds. She is taken presently up-stairs to a neat little bare chamber, containing a bed by accident, and washing accommodation out of absence of mind, or so it appears, from the draped concealed appearance of the one, and the ridiculous smallness and scantiness of the other, shut away in a mahogany chest, in the lid of which a small looking-glass is fixed. But over the magnificent *cheminée* is another and a most gorgeous affair, all gilt and ornamentation ; lovely lace curtains drape the windows, and the pattern of the dark-blue paper matches everything in the room, even to the penwiper on the *secrétaires*.

Dolly is more than content, and, once rested and refreshed, the elasticity of youth reasserts itself, and she is quite inclined to be in love with her new surroundings. *Le diner* is now ready, and she is handed in by Monsieur with every mark of deference, and seated at his right hand. There is *bouillon*, of course, and after it, stewed filet de bœuf, exquisitely tasting and tender; then a boiled fowl and some wonderful sauce ; then pears, apples, creams, cheese, biscuits, Bordeaux, coffee, and liqueurs—all the while much talking, exclamation, and enjoyment. But every hot course is served out on tiny cold plates ; there is only one fork used throughout, and—O horrors!—not a potato even ! Plenty of salad, and more than plenty of salad-oil ; but every one knows that that only refrigerates a not over-hot plateful at first, and of course one has to get used to it.

Dolly, however, is not very particular—indeed, I fear the tenderness of that filet is wasted on her—and takes it all in good

part as "novelty." Monsieur spreads his *serviette* over his chest and enjoys a good dinner ; Madame wipes her fork on hers, and ripples over with small talk ; Mademoiselle, being as yet only a *jeune fille*, takes no active part in the conversation, but trips about when anything is wanted, and holds her tongue. Eugénie the *bonne* forestalls everybody's wants. It is all so simple, so unpretentious, so well-bred, so foreign, and so amusing, that Dolly is charmed. She is ready even to forgive Monsieur when he sucks his fingers, when dinner is over, and then wipes them on the indispensable *serviette*. She affects not to see Eugénie wipe the custard-spoons on her apron, and re-present them for confitures. It is all so primitive, so simple, and so French, she adores it already.

In the *salon* after dinner, Madame, who is by the way an invalid, reclines on the sofa ; Monsieur remains in the *salle* with a cigar (*six* she afterwards discovers) ; Mademoiselle, in a gentle limp sort of way, devotes herself to her amusement. She is tall, this Mademoiselle, and, for a Frenchwoman, thin ; she is plain, decidedly, being swallow, like her mother, with too pronounced features and not over good teeth ; she carries more than her real age, partly through delicate health induced by an indoor life, and, if she were an Englishwoman, would probably be placed past recall among the category "uninteresting," and, later on, "maiden lady." Being French, all this is redeemed by a certain vivacity of dark eye and crimped hair, faultless dressing, and regulated movement of body and limbs natural to her race. Dolly did not dislike her ; nay, as she said to herself, perhaps in time might even grow fond of her. In the course of the evening she left the room, evidently a concerted arrangement with her mother, and Madame raised herself on the couch and opened battery on Dolly.

" You will see, Mademoiselle, that our daughter is extremely delicate ; her health is not strong at all, at all ; she needs care

and study. It is for this reason we have sought a young girl to be with her, to companionise her, to direct her in fact, for my own health is not equal to the effort. Our doctor, an excellent boy, he said to me only yesterday, 'Madame, what Mademoiselle requires is fresh air, cheerful companionship, amusement; give her these, and she will be strong.' But there, what will you? My good young lady, I have not the health or the time to give her all this. It is you therefore who will be kind enough to do it. You, who are so capable, you will read with her, you will teach her English, you will walk with her, you will play duets together, you will, *enfin*, be friends together; for she loves you much, she has told me so already, and it is a charming thing that kind heaven has sent you to us." Here she paused out of breath, and Dolly struck in: ~~she~~ would be very glad to be of any use to Mademoiselle; ~~she~~ would do her best.

"It is not for the sake of the English only, Mademoiselle, ~~t~~ you have been good enough to come to us; O no, for that Delmaine is perfectly equal to teaching her, and, indeed, I often, often talked of doing so. He reads and translates ~~y~~ language beautifully, beautifully; but he is scarcely equal ~~to~~ the fatigue in fact, and it is a young girl of her own age ~~Lou~~ requires. She is exceedingly clever, my daughter—O, ~~qu~~ advanced. She is accustomed to think and act for herself ~~qu~~ in the *English* way, I tell her; for, you know, your young ~~g~~ do as they choose more than ours, my dear Mademoiselle; ~~it~~ the spirit of your nation. M. Delmaine says it is the spirit ~~of~~ Protestantism; but that I know nothing about. We, however, we hear they do, and Louise is wild to go to England. But for that, I tell her, she must wait—wait a little—until, perhaps somebody else takes her; for, my dear young lady, I will now tell you a little piece of news you ought perhaps, to know in advance. It is that our daughter is affianced—yes, affianced, to

an excellent partner—*un bon garçon tout à fait*—one who will make her exceedingly happy. He resides in this town with his only sister ; he has a charming house ; it is an excellent marriage. You will see him soon ; but he is now in Paris on some business ; he will be home in a week, then we shall be happy

“But Louise, believe me, will not consent to be married immediately ; no, figure to yourself that she refuses to listen to his representations, to all our representations ; some young girl's folly or other. O ! She is very *entêtée*, is Louise ; but she says no, no, wait a little ; and he, he is an angel, he waits. I tell her it is monstrous conduct ; but she persists, though he is most attentive. We have had so many demands for my daughter ; but M. Delmaine has refused them every one but this one, because M. Emil Gérard is an excellent *parti*, and such an excessively good *garçon*. But I tire you, my good demoiselle : you have need of your bed : go, I implore of you ; do not make the ceremony ; go to your room, Louise will conduct you.” And Louise coming in at the moment, followed by her papa, all three joined their entreaties that Mademoiselle would have the goodness to repose herself after the terrible fatigues of her long journey.

“We have the pleasure you show our pretty town morrow the morning, my good young lady,” cries Monsieur, coming very near her and smelling horribly of smoke. “Me take you show ze lions, ha, ha, ha !” and he rubs his hands and shows much baldness of head as he finally bows his farewell ceremonies at the door. “Une charmante petite fille,” he says, returning to the bosom of his family ; “n'est-ce pas que nous avons bien fait, nous, ma femme ?”

Madame and Mademoiselle were quite of the same opinion.

## II.

DOLLY opened her eyes the next morning to a day of brilliant sunshine. And sunshine was in her thoughts as well. How pleasant is that stolen five minutes of morning reverie snatched by the wicked from the righteous toil of daily duty ! Talk as one may against the iniquity of the thing, the laziness, the selfishness, the idleness, and the other sinful *nesses* that all pious folk tell us the practice involves, who does not know the content, the peacefulness, and the calm enjoyment of that five minutes, blessed beyond all the other five minutes of the day ? It is then that luxurious recollection of the past day's doings visits one ; it is then that soothing plans of the approaching one are mentally mapped and made. I am not, I fear, among the pious folk, for I love my morning dreams dearly. And Dolly's were tinged with hope and youth. She liked these good, fussy, kind people. She felt equal to the task lying before her. She was full of golden visions of emolument awaiting her at the end of this experience. She thought herself a most fortunate girl. After all, things go by comparison. Here was this French girl, with a moneyed future before her, engaged to be married to a charming man, no little growing-up brothers and sisters to think about, no cares of any kind, but taking it all so placidly, and not even seeming the happier for it ? Well, it was a queer world.

Little Dolly had no fortune that she had ever heard of coming to *her*, unless it dropped upon her one fine day from the skies ; and as for a lover,—well, she had had her little fancies, as what other young woman already arrived at the age of two-and-twenty has not ? But two out of the three were as poor as herself ; and the third, after nearly breaking her heart by doing

everything *but* speaking, suddenly went off and emigrated to Canada without so much as a good-bye. That was nine months ago now, and Dolly is determined to have nothing more to do with the faithless sex, either mentally or morally, but to live out her life, and do her duty in it as faithfully as she could, and not trouble her head about so visionary a thing as happiness.

How many people set out on the same virtuous determination ! And how many, alas, narrow down at last to the direful prose such determination too often ends in ! But when Fortune *will* step in with fairy favour, and suddenly gild the gray horizon, how astonishingly soon the sons and daughters of Duty accommodate themselves to the golden change ! Full of the first virtuous reflections, however, our little Anglaise descends soberly to the *salle*, and is received by Monsieur with happy flourish of trumpets, and the remark that "the morning sunshine has arrived." How embarrassingly fond of compliments is this amiable gentleman ! Dolly can hardly hinder a smile as she regards him. Monsieur is attired in a gorgeously flowing flowered dressing-gown, a yellow-silk handkerchief round his neck, and his feet thrust into green-and-gold slippers. He explains that Madame's health is so unfortunately delicate as to forbid her descending so early, and that she *déjeunes* in her own room. "Ma fille," however, presently enters, just as faultlessly dressed as on the previous evening, and the three partake of *café au-lait* and bread-and-butter. The second *déjeuner* is at twelve o'clock, and until that hour the two girls retire to a pretty little morning-room, and commence their studies. Mademoiselle is painstaking and persevering, not by any means clever ; Dolly is very earnest and unselfish. The two make rapid progress, at any rate in each other's acquaintance and good opinion, if not in English prose, and both are equally surprised at the rapidity with which *midi* sounds.

By that hour Madame is in the *salle* all ready to receive them, but clad in a wondrous *peignoir*, and in a state of incompleteness as to coiffure which much shocks our Dolly, who is not yet used to French ways and appearances. But Madame's health again is so delicate, so very delicate, that she never dresses herself before the afternoon, and she hopes this kind young lady will excuse her? So saying she wipes a soup-plate with the ever-useful *serviette*, and proceeds to serve the soup. English eyes open a little more over this second meal, but still there is a glamour over everything. Monsieur, it is true, has the reprehensible habit of taking snuff between the courses, and is very noisy over his Bordeaux. Madame carves the fowl on her own plate, Dolly is nearly sure with her own knife; all three elevate their bones, and unmistakably enjoy them *aux doigts*. Still, the kindness and the hospitality are unflagging, and the stranger is made to feel most thoroughly at ease. Monsieur is excessively curious about English habits and customs, about the relation of which he proceeds to question Dolly, much as one might a native from the utmost region of Kamschatka.

"You love your Queen in England?" he asks, as, the weightier labours of the meal over, he helps himself with finger and thumb to a very big lump of sugar, and meditatively stirs his coffee. "You fear not the Revolution?"

Dolly thinks on the whole not; on which he launches into unbounded admiration of so extraordinary a country.

"It is a good thing there are no other gentlemen here," whispers Mademoiselle, smiling; "my father *surexcites* himself always in talking politics with them; but my mother and I fortunately are of the same opinion with him."

"Yes, Mademoiselle, we are all Legitimists here, and we are not afraid to say it; for me, I desire but one thing—that all Republicans should be guillotined, ha, ha!"

"Calm thyself, calm thyself, my dear," says Madame lan-

guidly ; " my nerves are but feeble, and to-day is my 'reception,' thou art aware."

" Great heaven, ma femme ! thou hast reason. I grieve for that, because I fear these poor young ladies must remain within to-day in consequence ? "

" It would be but polite," says Madame ; and so, accordingly, it is arranged, to Dolly's great disappointment. Nevertheless the afternoon proves sufficiently amusing. An hour later, Madame descends in faultless violet-and-black cashmere ; Mademoiselle in gray. The *salon* is arranged for visitors, with all the wool-work armchairs in a circle under the chandeliers, footstools before each, and a general air of elegance and ceremony falls upon the entire household. Madame Delmaine's weekly day of reception was an important affair in the town. Dolly, intensely interested, but a little nervous, awaits the opening of the drama ; she feels horribly " English " and in the way, and is destined to feel still more so as the time goes on, so voluble, so vivacious, so loud, and so alarming does the company strike her ; but fortunately everybody has such a wonderful amount to say that nobody pays much attention to her.

That is what strikes her more than anything—the astonishing volubility. One would think all these dear friends had hardly met for six months, instead of being in the daily habit of seeing one another at intervals ; but the repartee, the sally, the news, the challenge, and the counter challenge, roll so deftly from one tongue to another that it is impossible to catch the half. While she is answering one remark half a dozen others have intervened ; and at last she gives it up in despair, and thinks never, never will she understand this most confusing of languages. She is presented with great ceremony to each individual member, and all make some courteous remark ; but most, after a while, attributing her quiet answers to English gravity and spleen, turn their attention to each other.

Dolly is but too grateful for this, and would have given anything, I think, to have only *listened* to the scene from one of Madame's *armoires*. She noticed that all the young ladies spoke little ; that all the young married ladies were very gay, and talked and laughed much more ; that Monsieur did the gallant to every fair dame in the room ; that all the gentlemen were polite to a fault ; but that the innuendoes and the conversation (half at least of which she lost) generally took a turn which would have raised the hair on many pious English heads. But when she found courage to raise her eyes to observe the effect of these various remarks, none was to be seen—simply none; a glance, a pause, and the idea is lightly shaken off, to give place to the next comer, on the thistledown surface of fairy wings.

There was one lady there who immensely interested, and it must be confessed rather repulsed, Dolly. She was the wife of the Colonel of the regiment then quartered in the town ; a plump pretty-looking woman of forty, with rouged cheeks and ringlets of glossy black hair, on the top of which a lace hat was coquettishly placed, under the raised brim of which two large black-and-white daisies nestled caressingly ; she carried in a well-gloved hand two lovely hothouse flowers ; a beautiful little foot reposed, well in sight, on her tapestry footstool. Dolly noticed all these minutiae thoroughly ; she could not take her attention off this novel specimen. Look where she would, she saw the flashing eyes, pearly teeth, and *mignonnes* features of this most attractive looking personage, and heard the loud laugh and brilliant sally which kept pace with her appearance. Madame St. Pierre, she afterwards heard, was a Bretonne, which fact appeared to excuse much licence in Norman eyes, and was acknowledged to be the prettiest woman in the town. Dolly saw and heard quite enough to sober her. M. le Colonel did not put in an appearance ; but Madame found quite enough to

amuse her in a couple of junior officers, who were no doubt paying devoted court, vicariously, to their commander-in-chief. Report said the Colonel, who was sixty, and as yellow as a guinea, from a long course of Cochin China, was furiously jealous.

Sitting next to la Colonelle was a small, spare, wizened little lady, of dejected expression and much repressed demeanor. Dolly took a vast interest in her as she caught the name, "Mademoiselle Gérard ;" but she was positively over fifty and excessively plain. Many inquiries after her brother elicited the news that he would arrive home in three days. Not a muscle of Mdlle. Delmaine's face moved. One would have said she had not heard the announcement.

"What an icicle !" said Dolly to herself. But a few minutes afterwards, when the conversation turned upon a poor man who had been run over in the street and nearly killed, leaving a wife and two little children, among the many "O ciels !" and "Mon Dieu, que c'est donc horribles !" which flew around, her lips only were silent, but her eyes were full of tears.

The company kept streaming, streaming in, and Madame's little *salon* became full to overflowing. Madame herself, elegant, sparkling, and amusing, kept up the ball of conversation as only a French hostess can, and Dolly arrived at the conclusion that probably her nerves and her health were alike put off and resumed at pleasure.

"She's a humbug," said stout little Dolly to herself, with British candour.

Yes, of all the family she liked Mademoiselle the best. See her now, politely answering that very foolish elderly gentleman, who evidently, as his manner indicates, is pouring into her ear an interminable string of profuse compliment and flowering jargon ; but she is only just enduring it, that is all, and Monsieur had better take his wares elsewhere.

"Do I adore flowers ? Ah, Mademoiselle," he is saying, in a sort of ecstatic rapture, "I only adore one thing—woman, amiable woman ! But yes, still I love flowers ; they are emblems to me of love and pleasure." In this way the amiable fool is running on, to Dolly's intense amusement and Mdlle. Delmaine's intense disapproval, when the door is suddenly thrown open, and an astonishing event descends upon the company. Coming hastily in, puffing and panting, but still with a certain ponderous dignity of carriage, is an immense individual, clad in thick greatcoat and woollen scarf. He carries in his hand an umbrella, which nearly drops to the ground as he blankly surveys the company.

"Ah, great heaven !" he murmurs plaintively, "if I had not forgotten it is the reception-day of Madame !" Then hastily recovering himself, with true French vivacity he advances smiling towards the hostess. If "chère Madame" will excuse a giddy traveller for thus intruding ? For his part, he is truly grateful to have the opportunity of meeting so many good friends. "Chère Madame" most certainly has already done so, for she advances towards him in a sort of rapture, extending a welcoming hand which is devotedly saluted. Then Monsieur comes forward, and—yes ! the two men absolutely embrace ; at which Dolly can hardly restrain a smile, for both are enormously stout and very nearly of an age ; and then he turns to Mademoiselle, who is quietly standing up to receive him, with the faintest of blushes on a grave face.

"May I be permitted ?" he says, and bends over the long fingers. Mademoiselle colours up and looks disapproving ; mamma hastens to the rescue and applies a hundred questions. This, then, is the lover ! Yes, this is M. Emil Gérard, who has unexpectedly finished his business in Paris sooner than he expected, and hastened home on wings of rapture to greet the family of his beloved.

By this time the room begins to clear—even Mademoiselle Gérard, who, perhaps, has not appeared as overjoyed to see her brother as might have been expected, has taken a frigid leave—and the family are left to entertain the new-comer.

“ Will you take a friendly dinner with us, *en famille?* ” asks Madame, beaming from her daughter to him and back again.

Monsieur Emil is overjoyed, charmed; but Mademoiselle does nothing more than faintly echo the polite invitation. He is presented in due form to Dolly, and is charmed, enraptured, to have the happiness of meeting her; he seems already to claim a sort of possession over her; for is she not a belonging of his angel? Then he retires into the vestibule, and divests himself of his *paletot* and mufflers, and comes back beaming, holding several parcels in his hands, besides an enormous bouquet.

Dolly now takes a quiet survey of him, and is almost appalled at what she finds. Well, he is perhaps a few inches smaller when out of his greatcoat, but still what one could term nothing else but enormous. Big every way—immense shoulders, short arms, large head, no neck to speak of, bald—yes, bald, and moreover so ridiculously like M. Delmaine that she no longer wonders at the coolness of his *fiancée*. M. Delmaine’s moustache is white, and M. Gérard’s is grizzled, that is all the difference: there can hardly be ten years between them; and both are so absurdly fat and smiling and uninteresting, that it is a great trial to her self-control to see them bowing to and complimenting each other.

What Dolly especially disliked of all in poor M. Gérard was perhaps his boots, which were of a light-brownish yellow (the tops), and laced up the side, but perfectly fitting and, for his size, excessively small. Glancing next at his hands, however, she almost transferred her disapproval towards them—so large, so soft, and so “plummy,” were these ugly extremities, and garnished with horribly long filbert nails.

Poor Mademoiselle Delmaine ! Here, indeed, was a rent in her rosy future which no imagination could get over, and the four little brothers and sisters at home seemed gilded in comparison. Poor M. Gérard, little cognisant of the unfavourable impression he was making, blithely undid his paper parcels, and, laying them open on the table, placed the bouquet in the middle, and offered them all figuratively at his lady's feet.

"See here, what magnificence ! The kind thought of our excellent friend. My Louise, art thou, then, not happy ?" cries Madame, clasping her hands in a rapturous ecstacy, and lifting grateful eyes to heaven. But Louise is not by any means so overcome with gratitude as duty expects of her.

M. Gérard has gone up towards her, and is attempting to conduct her forwards to the inspection ; but she resists, and a few low hasty words of conversation pass between them. Dolly heard a snatch or two of it.

"I forbid you to do so ; I am annoyed ; I am in anger," murmured Mademoiselle hurriedly ; and, "But you will pardon me, my angel ; I could not help it," came from him. Then she slowly and impatiently came forward, and looked down at the presents with pouting lips.

"What will Mademoiselle say to me ?" she says, half laughing. "She will think I am a baby with all these toys ;" and she disdainfully lifts a coral necklace from its case.

"But ah, heaven, it is lovely ! Great skies, how it is superb !" cries Madame. "Mademoiselle can but think thee a very fortunate young girl to receive so many kind presents. What an *agrafe* ! Figure to thee, *mon cher*," turning to her husband, "an *agrafe* set in amethyst ! And here is a fan the most exquisite. *Mon Dieu*, what a fan !"

In this way Madame gloated over the treasures so despised, and I think she was right. They were indeed excessively pretty, and all in good taste. There happened to be two little

brooches in the form of keys, one in silver and one in black and gold ; both were brought for approval. Mademoiselle was to choose which she preferred. She hesitated a moment, beckoned to her mother, and whispered a few words. M. Emil was called to the consultation, at which he assisted by many emphatic nods, bows, and assenting smiles. Then he looked towards Dolly, and beamed approval as Madame came forward and addressed her.

"My daughter begs to speak to you, Mademoiselle," says Madame graciously ; and M. Emil gallantly hands her forward.

"If Mademoiselle will do me the honour to accept this little trifle," says he, holding up the black-and-gold key-brooch, "it will afford me the most great happiness, and I venture to suggest it will also do pleasure to her friend ;" and he glances oglingly at his *fiancée*, who looks at Dolly and says, "Certainly Yes," with the kindest of smiles.

How good, how kind, they all are to her ! How she loves this amiable family ! She accepts the brooch, blushing, and wears it down to dinner in a pretty lace cravat, which provokes General admiration. M. Gérard's, indeed, is rather marked ; he stares at her more than a little ; but Dolly knows it is on account of her relations with his lady-love.

She is asked to play after dinner, and does so. M. Gérard is also a musician ; performs, indeed, on the flute, and adores the art. Here again is another bond of union. His *fiancée* is awkward at the piano, and can never be induced to play before anyone. Mademoiselle must draw her out—must make her play duets. "She will soon make progress with so charming a mistress."

"Mademoiselle, sings she at all ?" asks M. Delmaine, beginning to air his one accomplishment of language among all this talk of cultivation.

"A little, Monsieur," says Dolly.

"O den she will be enough good." Monsieur runs to the

piano and opens it once more. He can see that his son-in-law is more than struck by this unlooked-for evidence of skill ; M. Emil indeed stands open-mouthed, staring at the fair performer. "Dank you, mees," comes presently from his parted lips ; and at the sound it is Monsieur's turn to stare.

"*Vous parlez Anglais, Gérard ?*" he murmurs helplessly, leaning against the piano for support. "*Mon Dieu ! Mon Dieu !*"

"O yez, O yez. Von leetle, my friend," returns M. Gérard ; and he grins an awful grin at Dolly, and makes her, of course, a bow.

It is more than Dolly can stand. "O dear, whatever am I to do," she says to herself, "if these two awful old men are going to pepper me always with their English ?"

The ludicrous view of the case is quite lost on practical Miss Dolly.

"What, then, Emil also speaks the English !" cries mamma, enraptured. "Great heaven, but that, then, is magnificent ! O my Louise, that you will have happiness in speaking together !"

But Louise looks terrifically severe at this suggestion, and it is M. Gérard who has to respond to the raptures.

"M. Gérard will be so happy—O, so happy—to accompany this charming family to view the beauties of the town tomorrow !" And, in fact, does so, though Mademoiselle hardly speaks a word to him all day. Perhaps she was tired from the effect of her morning exertions ; for Dolly, on coming down to breakfast, had met her in company with Eugénie entering the front-door from a walk. It was from Eugénie they heard that Mademoiselle had been to visit the hospital, to see the poor man who had been so severely hurt the day before, and had spent nearly an hour by his bedside, seeking out and relieving his wretched family on the way home. Anyway, she has not much gaiety left for M. Emil. But he does not seem to miss it.

He laughs and chatters gaily to everybody, and looks a great deal more often than is at all necessary at Dolly, and quite makes up for others' silence.

M. and Madame Delmaire fortunately cannot walk far, and the expedition soon comes to an end. Dolly has been shown the town-hall, and walked round the Jardin des Plantes, and admired the lovely view from all parts of the heights, and then they come in.

M. Emil's reward is an invitation to dinner again, which it is needless to say he accepts. Dolly thinks of the poor little frumpy sister mewed up all by herself at home, but nobody else seems to do so.

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### III.

AND so the days go on, and Dolly gets more accustomed to the odd, rambling, pleasant life, and more to understand the limits of her duties. Mademoiselle she begins to grow really fond of ; for the French girl, once over her shyness, soon opens out and shows depths of real character and genuine affection. She, on her side, gets very fond of Dolly, and the three morning hours of study become hours of pleasure to them both. Not that she makes very much progress in her English. Dolly is in despair sometimes over those dreadful *th's*, and then the irregular verbs. She makes the most terrific faces over her efforts, and Dolly bursts out laughing, as our insular manner is, and Mademoiselle joins her, and the lesson becomes a joke ; but still, Rome was not built in a day, and while there is life there is hope. And they have serious talks too sometimes ; Mademoiselle is inclined to confidentialise.

"Do you ever marry gentlemen old enough to be your fathers

in England?" she asked one day, at the end of the lesson, just as they were preparing to put up.

"Well," said Dolly, considering, with the dictionary in her hand, "I don't think we do often; not unless we love them, any way."

"Love them!" echoed the French girl. "What has that to do with it? My mamma says young girls should never *love* their *fiancés* before marriage; it would be a thing the most indecent!"

"O," says Dolly, "French and English ways are so different. It's no use arguing over them. We never marry in England unless we love; at least, very seldom—only in the great world."

Louise sighed deeply.

"Ah," said she softly, "if I lived in England!" After a pause, "Would you advise a girl to marry if she did not care for a monsieur?" she asked.

"That depends," answered Dolly, "if she thought she ever could *grow* to care for him."

"But if she felt she never could?"

"Then, certainly not. Better live single all her days."

"But if it were the wish of her parents? If it were but a self-sacrifice, which our Church tells us is so holy?"

"No, no, no!" cried Dolly, with energy. "Let her never listen to such a creed; it is throwing away two happinesses instead of one."

But our Dolly had not much experience of these things, and spoke like the impulsive young creature she was. They were soon called to *déjeuner*.

"Here is a delightful project," says Madame, as the soup goes round. "We are all asked to spend the day in the gardens of the Château Montmorenci on Wednesday. It will be a charming day. Our good Emil has brought us tickets of entry; he

will come with us himself, and Mademoiselle *sa sœur* also. Is it not amiable?"

"Very, very," answers Monsieur, in the silence of the others. "Yes, yes, we will have a charming day; we will show Mademoiselle the beauties of our landscape. You love *ze country*?" he asks, turning towards Dolly. "Ah, I thought so. She loves the country. We will all enjoy ourselves."

Mademoiselle said never a word.

M. Gérard came in the evening, fat and beaming as ever. It was arranged they were all to drive to the château at one o'clock on Wednesday in two carriages.

Dolly was almost angry with her friend when she found that, through her contrivance, when the time came, it was Madame Delmaine, herself, and *le fiancé* in one *calèche*; and his sister, Louise, and her papa in the other. But she was still more furious with M. Gérard when she discovered that, far from his resenting the arrangement, on the contrary he rather seemed to approve of it, to judge from the alacrity with which he helped her into the carriage, and the unctuous way with which he then proceeded to seat himself opposite, and let his eyes fix themselves upon her. Her disapproval of him began to change into aversion, which she took at last no pains to conceal; but the only effect it appeared to have upon him was to increase his ponderous efforts to please. Madame Delmaine at length appeared to notice something strange; for, immediately on arriving at the entrance to the château, she arranged that the two girls should walk a little in advance alone.

Dolly, only too thankful to escape, kept so close to her friend that there was no separating them; nor did she have any more of Monsieur's unwelcome attentions until collation-time at four o'clock, when they all assembled in a room at one of the lodges to partake of *pâté* and Bordeaux wine. Then again she became the victim of his increasing gallantries; and it was with unconcealed

satisfaction that, after the meal was over, she succeeded in ~~in~~ separating herself with Louise, under a pretence of "sketching" the very beautiful scenery which surrounded them. Louise could not sketch, but she stood watching with unfeigned interest the pretty drawing of a wing of the château and background of noble chestnut-trees, which was rapidly growing into excellence under Dolly's skilled little hands, until a sudden accident threatened to put an end to the work of both performer and onlooker. The two girls were bending their heads closer together for a better inspection of the work, when a despairing exclamation from one broke the spell.

"*O ma chère ! See, I have upset your little water-can !*"

The water was indeed all soaking into the rejoicing grass at their feet, and what was to be done ?

"I must go and fetch some more," said Dolly, rising, and laughing heartily. "The good woman at the lodge will give me some, I have no doubt."

"No, do let me !" eagerly interposed the other ; and before she could be stopped she had seized the little bottle, and was off.

Dolly reseated herself, with a sigh of relief, and gazed at the beauty around her. How calm, how peaceful it all was ! She fell into a reverie, which, however, did not last very long, for a thick shadow presently stood beside her ; and there was M. Gérard, big, placid, and oily as ever. She was beginning to hate him.

"I fear I have had the misfortune to disturb Mademoiselle ?" says he, in his softest accents. "I come from Madame to announce our departure. She said I should find both you young ladies together."

"O yes," says Dolly, jumping up, and beginning to collect her materials in a great hurry. "Did you not meet Mademoiselle ? She has but this moment left me."

"No. Ah, what excellence ! Allow me ;" and he takes the





DOLLY'S INDIGNATION.

little drawing in his hand, darting a swift look intended to captivate. It only enrages her instead ; but what can she do ? She cannot snatch the drawing from him, and there he stands, still holding it, and consequently detaining them both.

"It is time to go," she says impatiently at last ; "they will be waiting for us. Please give it me."

"And what if they are waiting ?" says M. Gérard coolly. "Is it not of more importance to me to be speaking to you, you beautiful English one, whom my eyes must have told I admire ?"

She could hardly believe her ears. Was this indeed Mademoiselle's lover speaking ?

"O," she cried, shrinking away from him with instinctive horror, "Monsieur, you must be mad ! Hold your tongue this instant even !"

Rendered thus in English, the *taisez-vous à l'instant même* seems stripped of its command, and reduced almost to the ridiculous ; but in French the words were accompanied with an imperious gesture which fully matched them. He seized her hand, and tried to kiss it, but Dolly, snatching it away as hurriedly, first turned upon him in a kind of fury, and then, not trusting herself to speak, rushed away in a white heat. M. Gérard laughed, stooped down, and, picking up her paint-box, nimbly followed.

He was a Frenchman, and I daresay accustomed to such scenes. But the two had not gone many paces ere Madame Delmaine, suddenly coming into view, caught sight of the position in all its ambiguous bearings—Mademoiselle l'Anglaise, with angry face, running away, and her future son-in-law, cool and smiling, behind. But Madame was too true a French-woman to have seen the affair. Not a ruffle disturbed the serenity of her rouged face as she politely saluted the pair ; not a tone of her voice altered as she inquired of Dolly her success in art. Only on the way home it was somehow arranged that

Louise and she exchanged places, in spite of the former's open objections, and Monsieur was *not* invited in to finish the evening.

And from that moment Dolly felt herself watched ; watched as she had never before been in her life ; watched covertly in a manner which made her blood boil over even to think of. Yet what could she do ? She dare not do what she would have wished—go openly and tell Madame or Mademoiselle about it. No, no ; she felt she dare not. And so she went on from day to day in a miserable sort of state, sometimes longing she could go away—nay, almost resolved upon finding an excuse for so doing—and among all her incertitudes, only resolved upon one course of certain action, viz. that of completely avoiding the odious cause of her embarrassment. But this was not quite easy to do; for M. Gérard so pursued her with attentions, and so pestered her with amorous glances, and so thoroughly ignored all plainly-shown dislike to such proceedings, that it could no longer at last be kept a secret ; and Dolly one fine morning determined on leaving her comfortable quarters.

With this end she made use of a conveniently-arrived letter from home, and announced with a sinking heart the urgent need for her presence in the family circle.

Alas, Madame only shrugged her shoulders, cast up her eyes, and observing, “ Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, que c'est triste ! mais s'il faut ? ” continued her soup.

Monsieur made many ejaculations of despair, and looked at his wife for further orders.

Mademoiselle got very red, murmured, “ Mais, mon Dieu, que ferons-nous ? ” and then cast her eyes on her plate, and grew very silent.

Dolly saw it was a hopeless case, so continued with a brave face but heavy heart :

“ Yes, yes, I must really quit your kind roof. I am sorry, but my mother wishes me to come home, and at once. There is a

steamer to-day, I think, from——, and I will pack my boxes at once.” And directly *déjeuner* was over she left the room.

Well, it was all over, this happy French life, and now she must go back again to home-worries—nothing else for it; and a thousand anathemas were hurled at the offending head of the unlucky cause of her misfortunes. Then she set to work to repack her dresses, and arranged them, with many a heart-ache, in the old black trunk of English make and London name. As she was folding up the last a knock came at her door, and Mademoiselle entered.

“But this news is sudden,” she began, eyeing nervously the preparations, and in a constrained voice. Then flinging aside her ceremony manner, she went up close to Dolly, and clasped her two hands together on her shoulder. “O, my friend,” she murmured, in a choking odd sort of voice, “I know what is driving you away; it is monstrous! it is horrible!”

“Do you?” said Dolly, gazing blankly at her, all her innocent little subterfuges destroyed. “I beg your pardon, indeed I do; but it is not my fault.”

“I know it; I see it. But O, my dear friend, how I thank you for it!”

“Thank me for it?” echoed Dolly.

“Yes, thank you for it. You have relieved me of a nightmare.”

“What, then, she loves him after all!” said Dolly to herself.

“For my parents see it, we all see it,” went on Mademoiselle hurriedly; “there is no longer any need for concealment; all is all shall be, at an end between us now!”

“What? you mean to say you intend to break with M. Gérard?” asked Dolly, stupefied.

“But yes, certainly.”

“But—but tell me, Louise, did you love him?”

“Love him!” echoed the French girl, with contempt on every

feature ; " *Je le déteste !* Ah, mon Dieu, what am I saying ? — she corrected herself hastily ; " the saints forgive me for that." —

Dolly impetuously kissed her.

" Then never marry him, dear," she said.

" But I never mean to now ; my parents will see it. Ah, my dear, from what a fate have you not saved me !" and she heartily returned the kiss.

Then she went away, and Dolly finished her packing, and in an hour's time her adieus were said, and she was on her way once more in the wide world. She quitted — with terrible regret. As she got out of the train at the seaport whence the steamer started, a flushed and stout form descended from another carriage.

" Ah, dear miss," it said as it hurried towards her, " we meet again ! I heard at the house of your unfortunate departure, all alone, and I hastened to be able to offer my services to assist you on board your *bateau*."

" And did you tell Mdlle. Delmaine you were coming ? " asked Dolly, in a freezing tone, the only resource left her.

" But no, I did not mention that," he stammered, as he offered to relieve her of her cloaks and bags.

" Thank you, Monsieur, I require no assistance whatever ; and allow me to add, I think this persecution most ungentlemanly and cowardly," in grandiloquent tones.

" But, Mademoiselle, listen, for one instant only. Persecution you call it ? Nay, if you can but see the ardour, the true admiration with which I regard you ! One instant, I beg of you ! "

They had got into the waiting-room by this time, which was empty. Monsieur was quite ready to take advantage of the situation, and accordingly seized her hand, and was about vehemently to embrace it, when Dolly turned upon him in fury.

"How dare you!" she cried, her eyes kindling—"how dare you! Do you think I don't know the relation in which you stand to Mdlle. Delmaine? I am ashamed of you!"

"Mdlle. Delmaine? Ah, la pauvre petite! c'était bien une affaire de convenance, ça; mais c'est vous, c'est vous, chère petite, que j'aime."

But Dolly, staying to listen to no more, flew away, out at the door, down the passage, and straight into the first 'bus she could find, with a speed born of terror, disgust, and sense of the ludicrous combined. She alighted abruptly upon an old gentleman's feet, who mildly withdrew them and made way for her at his side; and fortunately the 'bus that instant moved off and saved her. The last object she saw was the rueful figure of poor Monsieur, holding her umbrella still in his hand, and agonisingly scanning every fly and vehicle but the right one, in search, doubtless, of his charmer. Dolly, although she certainly regretted the loss of her umbrella, could now only laugh in her sleeve, and wonder if he would take it back to Mademoiselle.

Dolly safely reached her home, our readers may be glad to know, but she is no longer Dolly Crawfurd. Six months after her return to England she received a letter from Canada stating that the writer at last found himself in a fair way of making his fortune, and hoped his dear Dolly had not forgotten him, although he *had* found himself too miserable to bid her good-bye. It was her old lover come back to her. And Dolly had not quite forgotten him, and now is very happy indeed under the guise of a Canadian farmer's wife.

She gets occasional letters from her friend Louise Delmaine, who is still (according to her own wish) unmarried, and likely to remain so. A month after Dolly left, the town was much electrified by the announcement that Madame St. Pierre, the

dashing lady of the Colonel, had eloped with—M. Gérard! ~~—~~ ! Report added, to escape a tyrant husband; but I doubt myself ~~—~~ if whether the poor lady had not exchanged one tyrant for ~~—~~ or another. M. Delmaine still sends his respectful homages to the ~~—~~ most fascinating of “Anglaises;” but I do not think Madame ~~—~~ has quite sufficiently forgiven her to add hers.



## LOVE IN A LIFT.

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LOVE pervades everything. It is omnipresent. Places and conditions absolutely fatal to every other human experience do not affect *la grande passion*. There is printed record of love in a balloon ; and the scientific gentleman at the defunct Polytechnic Institution could have borne credible witness that love has not been found impossible even in a diving-bell. Much endearing courtship has been conducted in railway carriages ; and the present writer, who has never tasted the honeyed sweets of " spooning " himself, once knew, however, an amiable gentleman who positively proposed, and was accepted, amid the awful gloom and roar of the Mont Cenis tunnel, and survived the strange sensation, and was married and happy ever afterwards, as the old story-books say. There is a farce, too, called *Love in a Fix* ; but love in an hotel-elevator ! Why, the same hotel actually advertised that identical lift in *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* as having been constructed upon an altogether improved principle, and furnished with a patent safety-break which rendered accidents quite impossible. But love has laughed at locksmiths and patent safety-breaks from the time of dangerous Helen and heroic Paris of Troy to that of Miss Blanche Whitney and Mr. Frank Fairlie, staying at the Cavendish Grand Hotel at Spaville the other day.

The Cavendish seemed altogether too immense and splendid for love, which demands, as you know, my dear madam, cosiness

and freedom from the scrutiny of unsympathetic eyes. There—  
Cupid was exposed to public observation in the greatest—  
caravansary of a notoriously scandal-loving and fashionable—  
*sanatorium*. Love seemed impossible in the grand-drawing—  
room, where dowdy dowagers and highly acidulated spinsters—  
stabbed reputations with their knitting-needles; utterly—  
impracticable in the noisy *salle à manger*, with the everlasting—  
“Yes, sah!” of the German waiters. In the conservatory there—  
were always some gouty old men, scandalously wealthy, talking—  
about the virtues of the medicinal waters which they had come—  
to Spaville to drink; too late, in many instances, to dilute the—  
numerous bottles of rich *Regina* they imbibed years agone.

Even the hall porter was a magnificent personage, with a— a  
marvellous expanse of shirt-front. He bore a semi-ecclesiastical—  
semi-aristocratic appearance. You hardly knew whether to—  
regard him as a duke or a bishop. You felt constrained to—  
address him respectfully as “Sir,” and wondered, with great—  
fear and trembling at the heart, whether such a superior being—  
would not regard your modest *honorarium* of half-a-crown with—  
lofty disdain. One lost one’s name and became a numeral—  
inside such an establishment. I never heard Miss Blanche—  
Whitney’s number, but Mr. Frank Fairlie was, I know, “skied,”—  
as they say at the Royal Academy, in “No. 593.” The figures—  
however, do not affect the story.

If the stately interior and sense of general splendour of the—  
Cavendish was fatal to sentiment, not so Spaville itself.  
Spaville is the home of romance. The neighbourhood might  
have been specially invented for lovers. The shady pine-woods,  
which clothe the bold hills that close round the watering-place,  
like investing lines on every side, have serpentine walks; and  
even such a stern political economist as Mr. John Ruskin has  
written in *Fors Clavigera* of the deep, secluded, stream-silvered  
valleys of Spaville that in them “you might expect to catch

sight of Pan, Apollo, and the Muses ; " while, in addition to all this, there are beautiful gardens, such as that emotional impostor, Claude Melnotte, might have painted to the confiding Pauline, and asked, " Dost thou like the picture ? " together with a Dome musical with Mendelssohn's melodies and fragrant with flowers. So fatal, indeed, is the spirit of flirtation in these Hesperidean Gardens that the Dome grows its own orange-blossoms for the numerous betrothals that are here brought about each season.

Miss Blanche Whitney and Mr. Frank Fairlie did not escape these facilities for flirtation. The young people were thrown into each other's society at the Cavendish. He had come down from chambers in town to kill a few days with his uncle, a wealthy silk-spinner of Manchester, who rolled in riches and a bath-chair, and whom Frank irreverently styled " the Cocoon " when speaking of his avuncular relative to Miss Blanche. Her papa was having the racking pains of rheumatic gout washed out of him at the hot baths, for which Spaville has been famous ever since the Roman occupation, and he hoped to leave his crutches behind him as a practical testimonial of the healing qualities of the thermal springs. Frank Fairlie was a good-looking, athletic, clever young fellow, broad of shoulder, blue of eye, blonde of beard, just a girl's ideal of a brave handsome Englishman. Blanche Whitney, although she had not, perhaps, what a painter would consider a single perfect feature in her face, set it off with such bonny brown wavy hair, such animated hazel eyes, such a vivacious little mouth, such a winsome charm of expression, that she became absolutely beautiful, especially when she smiled, and smiling she nearly always was.

No wonder that Frank Fairlie—who had in his time run unscathed the gauntlet of much female fascination, and had declared himself to be invulnerable to attack—was mortally wounded in the heart by Blanche. It was altogether done by

her indefinable, but irresistible, witchery of manner. And now how leaden seemed the hours when they were separated ; how fleet the time passed when they were together ; how often they met " quite by accident, you know ;" what walks and talks they had in shady wooded ways ; how they whispered sweet confessions and confidences in the sylvan solitude of the limestone dales, with only the silent and listening leaves to hear their story !

They had just returned to the Cavendish one evening from one of these romantic rambles, and were as loth to leave each other as lovers generally are, from when a certain young couple in Capulet's garden wished each other " a thousand times good-night," to these steam-engine degenerate days of breaches of promise and divorce courts. They promenaded the deserted corridor of the hotel. That, at least, was better than the frigid society of the drawing-room, the unappreciative atmosphere of the coffee-room. Both our young people were in a merry mood. They were full of the light spirits and audacious confidence that belong to youth and hope, and love and health. After a few turns along the carpeted passage, Frank remarked, in his happy careless manner, pausing at the bottom of the hydraulic elevator,

"I say, pet, shouldn't you like a ride on the lift ? It's perfectly safe."

"O yes," she said, with a gay little laugh. "It would be so awfully adventurous, don't you know."

"Then we'll go up."

They started, and between the third and fourth station or floor *en route* stopped.

"It has been the dream of my life—" What more he said we shall not report.

The elevator had paused hardly a minute when the night-porter passed along the corridor. He noticed that the lift was

not at the bottom as it should be. To prevent any possible accident, he fastened it safely, and walked away. The occupants of the lift suspended *in medio*, like Mahomet's coffin, could move the machine neither one way nor the other. They could not alight on any landing. They were prisoners in a dark tunnel. Perhaps they might remain in that terrible predicament all night. The situation, though excruciatingly farcical, did not present its humorous aspect to Blanche and Frank. The affair was somewhat compromising, too. Frank had placed Miss Whitney and himself in a pretty dilemma. Cool and collected as a rule, in this position he was utterly embarrassed. What could be done?

Ten minutes afterwards a Scotch gentleman, the director of a bank which was soon afterwards notorious as the scene of a terrible financial tragedy, when passing the lift, heard a piece of money fall. Perhaps it was his thrifty Caledonian love of the "bawbee," perhaps it was to avert the pecuniary danger impending, that he dropped on his knees and began to search the carpet diligently. He found the coin, and also one or two others which had doubtless fallen previously. They were two florins and a shilling. The bank director was rising from his devotional attitude when another florin fell down the hoist. Two half-crowns followed in swift succession, and were as quickly appropriated. Then lo! half a sovereign and a sovereign were dropped slowly; and he was greedily awaiting for more auriferous manna falling, when the manager of the Cavendish, a very little man for such a big building, put in an appearance.

"What is the matter, Mr. Mac Closky?" he enquired. "I hope, sir, you are not unwell?"

"O no! I am just engaged in picking up some money which some one is kindly dropping down the well. It will help to pay my bill, so I am grateful for it," he said, with a Scotch effort at "wut."

"Why, the lift is not in its place," exclaimed the manager, startled at the discovery. "Where's the night-porter? Robinson!"

"Here, sir!" said that functionary turning up with prompt obedience.

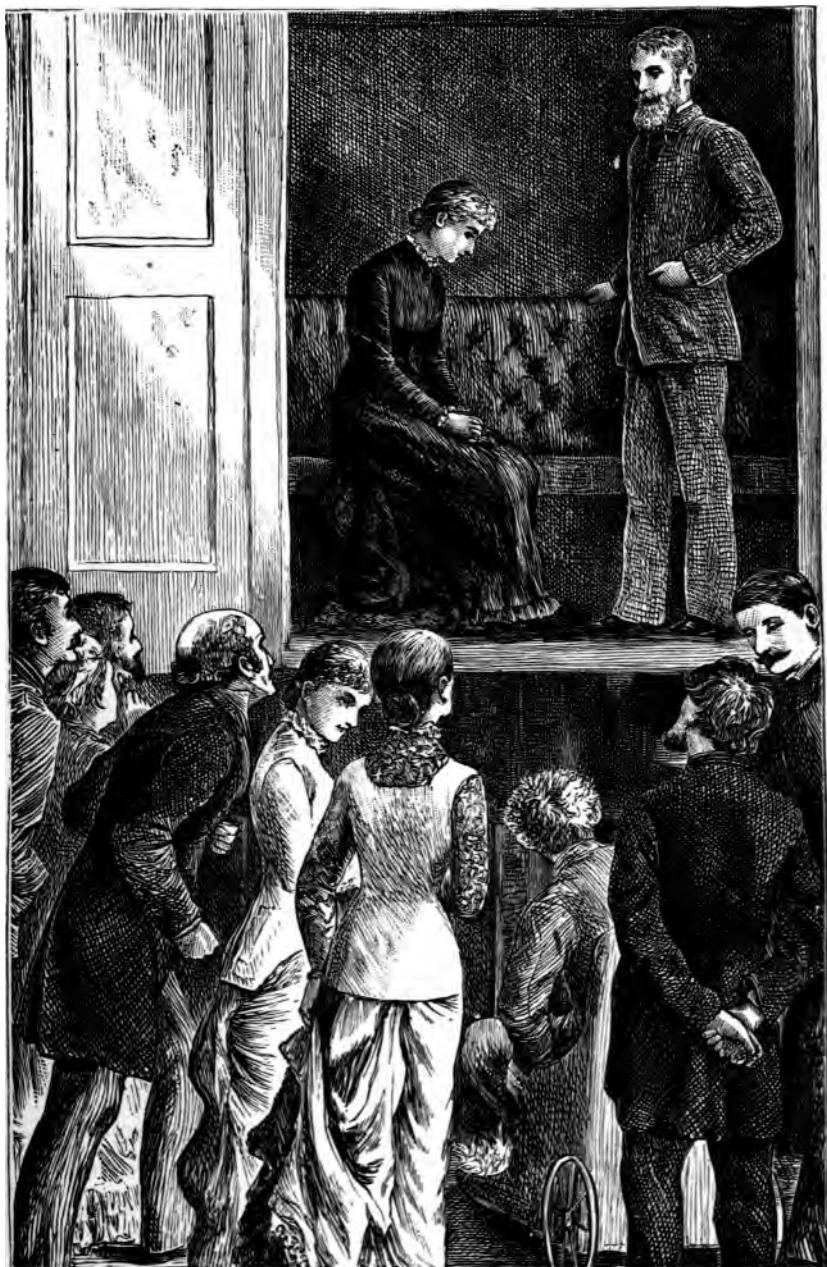
"What about this lift, Robinson?"

"Well, sir, I knows nothing at all about it, and that's all I does know. I saw that the lift was not right, sir; so I skotches it, and meant to ask the day-porter about it when he comes in the morning, sir. I knows nothing, and that's all I does know."

During these explanations the ladies and gentlemen issued forth from the coffee-room and drawing-room close by. A few noticing the Scotch gentleman still on his knees, concluded that he had been seized with a sudden spasm of illness. Soon an alarming report was spread. Curiosity and sympathy were aroused, and a small crowd of spectators, including Mr. Whitney, a severe-looking gentleman with no nonsense about him, and "the Cocoon," were gathered round the scene of this innocent comedy. Only too soon was curiosity gratified. There came from above an earnest entreaty, pathetic in its very humour.

"Let us down now, there's a good fellow. For heaven's sake let us down. I'll give you some more to-morrow."

The manager ordered the bolt to be removed, and slowly the lift glided down with its confused cargo. Slowly her dainty bottines and his drab gaiters came in view; there was a glimpse of bronzed velvet dress and light tweed trousers. There was great tittering among the ladies. The gentlemen whispered ominously. Now Miss Blanche Whitney and Mr. Frank Fairlie stood revealed: he with a nervous twitching on a pale face, and she blushing and looking as abashed as does my Lady eazle when she is discovered behind the screen in Sheridan's play.



LOVE IN A LIFE.

IL 298.



Mr. Whitney glared ; "the Cocoon" was white with rage.  
The angry father, in a paroxysm of passion accosted Frank :

"What the deuce do you mean, sir, by such conduct ?"

"O, nothing," he stammered. "I'd b-b-better m-m-marry  
your daughter, you know."

There was a quiet marriage about a month afterwards, and  
the sun never shone upon happier bride and bridegroom than  
Blanche Whitney and Frank Fairlie.

But that lift is watched like a thief to this hour.



## PETER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A FRENCH HEIRESS IN HER OWN CHATEAU."



### I.



SOMEWHERE, in England or in Dreamland, there was once a little town by the sea. It stood in a dip in the rocky coast, a narrow valley or combe, worn in the course of ages by a rapid eager brook. How the place ever got itself built or inhabited is a mystery. It was so lonely, so far from any other dwellings of men, so completely hidden, that one might walk along the cliffs quite unconscious of it, till suddenly one reached a steep

descent, and looked down on the square grey tower and long roof of a church, built half-way up the cliff-side; and below that again on the red roofs heaped together, and the fishing-boats moored by the little quay, sometimes torn from their moorings and dashed against the rocks in a high tide, which threatened to wash away the village altogether.

But all this may have been fifty years ago. Since then the place has been discovered by the English of this century; a coach runs to it from a town fifteen miles off; those who can never let anything alone have built a pier, a breakwater, an hotel, and even two or three villas. The little port has been made unromantically safe for the fishing-boats; a few bathing-machines are to be seen on the sands in the summer. A hundred years hence Herringshole will have become another Torquay, and may even have changed its uncouth old name for Bennettsville, in memory of Mr. Bennett, who built the pier and the breakwater, and—bad luck to him!—restored the church. The place has even now lost all its interest; no person of taste cares for it any more, except Cecilia, who declares she will always love it better than anywhere else in the world. With some people association is everything. I know one lady who has the tenderest feelings towards the large hall at Euston Station, and a gentleman who in his happiest dreams fancies himself on the staircase of a co-operative store. Both these, to be the scene of an idyl, are less satisfactory than Herringshole.

Cecilia Latham was a girl of large fortune, and entirely her own mistress. She was handsome, with a certain haughtiness of manner which her friends greatly regretted; for they knew that it frightened many charming people, who were not clear-sighted enough to discover the real gentleness lying underneath. As soon as Cecilia found herself independent—her parents had both died when she was a child—she took possession of her aunt, Mrs. Grey, a poor dull woman in bad health, for whose daughter Mary she had a sincere friendship. These three lived together for several years, during which Mrs. Grey, who had faded gradually in a life of snubbing and neglect, was petted and coddled and strengthened till she began to grow fat and rosy, and even to develop a will and opinions of her own.

Every autumn they went to some place by the sea, and Mrs. Grey never found herself so well or so happy as at Herring-hole, a late discovery, where there were no smart people to fidget and molest her.

But a very sad thing happened at Herringhole. Cecilia lost her favourite dog, her Skye-terrier, Peter, dearest and most devoted of animals. He disappeared at the end of their first visit to the place, and no trace of him could be discovered though his mistress advertised for months. Either he had been stolen, or some unknown accident had put an end to him. Just before this event the three ladies had agreed that Herring-hole in its freedom and picturesqueness was quite charming and that they would come again next year. But after Peter's loss Cecilia never mentioned the place, and Mary, who reflected all her feelings faithfully, would not for the world have reminded her of it. It was something of a shock to both girls when, on a summer afternoon at tea, Mrs. Grey looked up and said,

"Where are we going this year, Cecy? Do you still think of Herringhole, or have you changed your mind? I never enjoyed myself so much anywhere."

Mary started and frowned at her mother, who sat quite unconscious of these warnings.

"Didn't you, Aunt Sarah?" said Cecilia gently. "Very well; suppose we go there again."

"Nothing could be more delightful," said Mrs. Grey, with satisfaction.

She went on talking about Herringhole for the next half-hour. Afterwards Mary reproached her; but Cecilia in her turn reproached Mary, and said,

"You know I like to spoil your mother, Mary, and it would be very selfish to let poor Peter's memory keep one away from Herringhole. It is a dear little place, and I shall like to see it again. Do you remember that lovely dip in the downs, that

green basin, where we used to sit with a three-cornered piece of sea sparkling in front of us, and those rocks all purple with wild thyme? Yes, I shall be glad to go again."

"But, O," said Mary, "that was the very place where we first missed Peter!"

"I remember," said Cecilia. "Perhaps we shall find him there."

Mary shook her head and smiled. Months afterwards her cousin told her of a strange dream she had had, from which she had woken up with a strong desire to see Herringshole again, the very night before Mrs. Grey suggested it.

They travelled to the place by easy stages, reaching it in the afternoon. The day was cloudless, the sea an almost purple blue, gently heaving the fishing-boats that hovered here and there. The little pier and quay were in their usual state of fishy sleepiness. Cecilia and Mary set off about five o'clock on their old favourite walk. They climbed the stone steps from the village street, and then followed the narrow path under the churchyard wall, which led them out on the face of the green cliff, a steep ascent, till they reached its far-spreading table-land. They were rather silent, for they were both thinking of Peter, who had been such a constant delight and anxiety on this particular walk, and many like it. The green hollow that Cecilia had talked of lay about a quarter of a mile, as the crow flies, from Herringshole. There, last year, one might have fancied oneself a hundred miles from any dwellings of men. No living thing was to be seen there, except perhaps a goat picking his way over the rocks, or a white seagull slowly winging across the glittering foreground of sea. But now, as the two girls approached the hollow, walking noiselessly over the soft turf, they heard a strange sound. They heard

"the trowels fall  
Upon the stone, a thin noise far away."

"O, Cecy, what is that? It can't be—" began Mary.

Her cousin touched her arm and stopped her. She was herself listening, with her head a little bent and a look of intense surprise, the colour slowly deepening all over her face.

"It is most extraordinary," she said, in a low voice; and then she hurried on, and Mary hurried to keep pace with her.

They soon reached the place from which they could look down into their green lonely hollow. It was green and lonely no longer. It was full of carts and lime and ladders and squared stones, and all the confusion of building. The foundations of a large house, its walls some feet above the ground, filled up all the wide soft basin where the girls had sat last year, feeling safe in Nature's arms somehow, with her shelving green walls on three sides, and her broad shining sea filling up the fourth, and her safe calm sky overhead. Nothing left now but the sky; for even the sea seemed spoilt by low walls and terraced gardens, which were being laid out facing it, where the ground fell away to the edge of the steep cliffs. The house was being built in an old-fashioned form, three sides of a square, the fourth side open to the sea.

Cecilia stood gazing at all this with odd incredulous eyes. She did not join in Mary's exclamations of horror and abuse of the Goths who could have dreamt of building in such a sacred loneliness.

"People do dream of funny things sometimes," she said at last. "Let us go down and look at it."

Only two or three men were working there, fitting the stones together in ordered courses in the wall. Whoever the builder was, he plainly meant to make a solid building, against which the winter storms of Herringshole might blow their strongest. Stepping among planks and heaps of rubbish, Cecilia and her cousin made their way into the square court of the house, where they could see the whole plan of it. Even Mary forgot

her indignation in tracing out the rooms ; and Cecilia, who had sometimes wished to build a house herself, looked about her with an interest in which there was no indignation at all.

"We enjoyed the place last year," she said. "Now it is somebody else's turn."

"But his turn will be an unfairly long one," said Mary. "How very philosophical you are ! "

"I think somehow I must have expected it," said Cecilia. "Are things ever the same two years running ? I never find them so."

As they stood there among the rising walls, they were quite unconscious of being watched by anybody ; for the masons worked quietly on, not even turning their heads, and coming down from the cliff they had seen no one else about the place. But they were not so entirely alone as they fancied themselves.

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## II.

A YOUNG man, with a sketch-book in his hand, had strolled up from the direction of the sea, and seeing them in the court had perched himself on one of the low half-built terrace-walls of the garden, seemingly to wait till they had finished their inspection and gone away. He was an odd figure, almost scrubby in his dress, his face and hands and straw hat all burnt to a rich brown. He might have been a wandering artist, or any other irresponsible member of society ; for one thing was plain about him, that, though perhaps in an irregular fashion, he was a person whom "Society" would not disclaim. Looking with an idle curiosity at the strangers, he saw two well-dressed girls, one of them tall, fair, and dignified, low-voiced, slow in

her movements, and altogether pleasing to his eyes ; the other dark, eager, abrupt, and rather noisy. Mary was condemned at first sight by this unprejudiced observer. He sat watching them for about five minutes. At the end of this time they turned and came towards him ; they were obliged to pass him on their way to the sea.

Something in Cecilia's air generally disposed the most indifferent strangers to behave to her politely. As she came down among the stones she glanced at this young man. Mary almost stared at him. He rose up from the low wall where he was sitting, and with a sudden impulse, as it seemed, seized a wheelbarrow that stood in their way and moved it aside. A man pushing a barrow does not look very dignified. Perhaps the young artist remembered this too late, for he coloured and smiled a little as he lifted his hat in answer to Cecilia's slight bow of thanks. None of the three spoke ; the girls walked on quickly, and soon disappeared, for just below this hollow there was a shelving stony path, which brought one gradually down to the beach ; and they had spent many pleasant hours in the little cove last summer at low tide.

An hour or two later, when they had clambered up again and were passing the house on their way home, all was quiet there. The masons had done their work and gone home. As they went through what was to be the garden, Mary began again to lament : How would one get down to the beach when all this was finished and lived in ?

"I do think it would be a most selfish person who is building here," she said.

Just then they happened once more on their friend of the barrow. He was lying full length on the grass, with his chin propped on his hands, staring landwards. The girls' voices roused him ; he got up quickly, and this time moved himself out of their way.

"Pray don't let us disturb you," said Cecilia gravely.

"O, the place is quite encumbered enough already; don't you think so?" he replied, smiling.

Cecilia hesitated a moment. She had been rather formally brought up, and though one could not possibly be angry with the perfectly well-bred ease of his manner, his dress and looks did not at once inspire confidence.

"I was here when the first sod was turned," he went on, looking away at the building, "and I must confess that it gave me a pang. You don't like it, do you?"

"Not very much," said Cecilia. "At least, I used to be fond of this hollow."

The young man seemed to look at her with a shade of additional interest. He ceased smiling; a sad look came into his eyes, which were dark blue and clear, like the sea that evening.

"Do you know who is building this house?" said Mary. "Is it Mr. Bennett, or some other Herringshole person? Just like them!" she added to herself.

"No, it is not literally a Herringshole person," answered the young man. "He has land about here, though. It is Lord Alderney."

"What can he want with a house here?" said Mary indignantly to her cousin.

"He could not have found a more beautiful situation," said Cecilia.

"That's true, certainly," said their new acquaintance. "There is some excuse for him. I could lie here and stare about me for hours. Perhaps you know Lord Alderney?"

"Not at all," said Cecilia; and then the young man found himself suddenly dismissed. She had bowed and walked on, and her cousin could do nothing but follow her.

Their adventures of the evening were not yet over. Who

was this, coming bounding along the hill-side with an activity not to be expected from so short-legged a person? The girls stood still, looking first at him and then at each other; the appearance of a ghost could hardly have startled them more. Then Cecilia found her voice and called "Peter!"

The dog stopped short like a human being and looked at her. Then he ran up and began dancing round her with his old yelp of welcome, the "joy-bark" that she knew so well. Then, as she held him by the forepaws, looking eagerly to see whether this was really her own lost Peter, he turned his head, pricked his ears, and listened. There was a shrill whistle in the distance. Peter snatched himself from his mistress and was gone, lost to sight in the hollow from which they had just ascended.

"O Cecy, it can't have been Peter!" Mary exclaimed.

"It was Peter," said her cousin.

"How very odd everything is? What are we to do now? Who can have got him? Shall we go at once and claim him? Is it the artist, do you think?"

Cecilia stood thoughtfully digging holes in the turf with her parasol.

"It must be," she said. "There was nobody else. No, I don't very much want to go back now. It is time we went home. I shall see him again."

Mary thought this was very strange and foolish. She tried to argue a little; but Cecilia walked on, and explained her conduct by saying that no doubt the young man was staying at Herringshore, and she would rather take another opportunity of asking him how he came by the dog. They talked of nothing else till they reached the path by the churchyard; then there was a sudden patter of soft feet behind them, and looking round they saw Peter, who was following them quite naturally, sniffing about at various objects of interest, and seemingly con-

vinced that last year was the only reality, and that his separation from his mistress had been nothing but a dream. He must have felt still more sure of this when they reached the top of the steps, and when Cecilia stooped and picked him up in her arms, not forgetting her dislike of his running through the fishy streets of Herringshore.

"After all, my dog, I think I have the best right to you," she said; and she quietly carried him home to their lodgings.

That night it seemed as if Peter had never been away.

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### III.

PETER, the real hero of this little story, deserves a few words of description. He was a thorough-bred Skye of the small prick-eared kind, and the handsomest of his family. His paws were large and bright and silky, almost silver in colour. The long hair on his back shaded into a dark leaden-gray, with silver locks behind his ears, which were fringed brown velvet. With these beautiful ears he talked and smiled and showed his every little emotion. His large brown eyes looked out under a shadow of silver hair. His tail was dark, with long-falling hair, and he carried it with dignity. He was a wise dog, with all the grave thoughtfulness of his race, and yet capable of the wildest romps now and then. He generally understood everything that was said by his human fellow-creatures; but when they addressed him on any strange subject, and he was not quite sure of their meaning, he would cock his head slightly on one side, with a note of interrogation in every feature, and wait till they explained themselves. It was no wonder if such

a companion as this was missed and mourned, and welcomed back like a dear friend returning.

Peter was very well and happy. He had not suffered in any way during the year's absence from his mistress, except in a certain neglect of his toilet. Less careful hands had washed and combed him, and though his coat was bright enough, it was tangled and matted in many places. The next morning after breakfast Cecilia washed him, and took him into the garden in front of the house to dry himself in the sun. She and Mary sat there with their books. Mary read diligently; but Cecilia held her open book listlessly in her hand, her eyes wandering to the purple sea and the sails crossing it, sometimes smiling faintly as she looked at Peter rolling on the grass or playing with a ball she had given him.

"Mary," she said at last, "how can you read? Will he think we are dog-stealers?"

"He is a dog-stealer himself," said Mary, dropping her book obediently.

"Nonsense!"

"Well, how did he get Peter? He looked rather what you call Bohemian. He is a Communist, I daresay."

"Communism in dogs won't do," said Cecilia.

"No; Peter could not very well belong to both of you, could he? not even if you lived in the same place. I rather hope he is a dishonest person."

"Why should you say that? Mary, you are talking stuff."

"I am talking very good sense, Cecy, begging your pardon. If he got the dog dishonestly, he won't dare to try and get him back. Otherwise of course he will. And I think it was a pity you did not turn back last night and come to an understanding with him."

"Something of this sort," said Cecilia. "'Are you a thief, or am I a thief? Which of us is the owner of this dog?' We

shall never decide it ourselves. We must get some impartial person who knows neither of us nor any of the facts."

" You had better leave it for Peter himself to decide," suggested Mary.

" That really is a good idea. Peter will of course decide in favour of me. Mary, you are very clever, though not quite original."

Mary laughed a little. She thought her cousin was in an odd humour, but did not dare to tease her, though she felt a good deal of amusement.

The garden where they sat was divided from the road by a low wall and a little gate at the foot of three steps. The latch of this gate was defective, and Peter had learnt last year the trick of opening it for himself. Just as Cecilia ceased speaking they saw a straw hat coming rather quickly along under the wall. Then past the gate walked the young artist. He did not see them, for he was looking away at the sea, and as he went along he whistled a careless tune. Peter started, pricked his ears, was down the steps and through the gate before Cecilia had time to move. She started up and called him. Mary exclaimed, and ran down to the gate to look after him. He was jumping joyously round the young man, who walked on at the same pace, whistling gaily. Neither of them looked back, and in another moment they turned a corner towards the downs, and were out of sight.

" My idea was not such a good one," said Mary dismally. " But he did not hear you. It was not a fair trial, really."

" Of course he heard me," said Cecilia, a good deal flushed. " He is demoralised ; and I don't know what to do next."

" You won't give him up ? "

" No ! Give up my Peter, Mary ! What are you thinking of ? "

Mary had seldom seen her cousin so much upset. Cecilia,

the dignified, dreamy, and gentle, was actually on the verge of crossness. She went into the house, and did not see her relations again till luncheon-time. Then Mary, who had been out walking with her mother, came in with a little air of triumph. She and Mrs. Grey had been making discoveries. Mrs. Smith, the pastrycook, the great gossip of Herringshole, had told them all about the young gentleman with the sketch-book.

"He is not a gentleman, dear Cecy," said Mrs. Grey. "You will take my advice, dear, won't you, and be very careful what you do about the dog?"

Cecilia gave signs of not having recovered her temper. She looked perfectly indifferent, and with lowered eyelids proceeded to cut bread.

"Probably Mrs. Smith knows nothing whatever about him," she said after a pause.

"O, she knows everything, I assure you," said Mary. "A casualty sort of man, that was what she called him. He is employed somehow about Lord Alderney's house, either to pay the workmen or to see the plans carried out or something. Mrs. Smith said he was an idle chap, and she did not see how he could be of any use to Lord Alderney, for he does nothing but lounge about all day. She thought he was a sort of steward, but she didn't suppose he would be trusted with much money or with much responsibility either. He was here last summer, she said, and spent his whole time boating. Cecy, I think Peter has very bad taste."

"I am rather tired of Peter's name," said Cecilia.

## IV.

FOR three days nothing was seen or heard of Peter. I suspect that if Cecilia had pleased herself she would have left Herringshole, which had become an unsatisfactory place to her. But her aunt was enjoying it, and gaining health from its sweet breezes, and Cecilia did not even suggest going away. She was disturbed and melancholy, however. She did not care to go out much, and would not be induced to walk towards the east downs, where her old favourite haunts lay. Mrs. Grey and Mary wished that Peter had never reappeared at all.

But one morning Mary, coming in from a walk, opened the door of the room where her cousin was sitting, and shut it again immediately, having sent in something which began to bounce round Cecilia, to claw her gown and lick her hands, and show every sign of joy.

"You again, Peter!" said Cecilia. "I hope you mean to stay with me this time, bad dog!"

For about five minutes Peter seemed as if he cared for nothing but to sit at her feet, gazing up sentimentally into her face. Then he jumped up, ran to the door, scratched at it gently, and sat down by it, looking at Cecilia.

"No, Peter," she said. "You are very inconstant, but I won't let you go this time."

On this Peter came back to her, sat up and begged, then ran back to the door with a little sharp bark. There he sat, looking at Cecilia with his head on one side, as if to ask her what she meant by being so immovable.

"No, Peter," she said again; and being aware that she was quite resolved, he came back and stretched himself at her feet with a deep sigh. At every sound, every passing step, he

pricked his ears and looked up eagerly, but Cecilia did not move.

She was thinking, and asking herself what she had better do. This artist, this steward, or whatever he was, this irresponsible young man, was certainly a thief so far as to have stolen her dog's heart away from her. She did not care for a divided love ; in her soul she was beginning to despise the inconstant Peter, though she loved him still. Not a gentleman ! that of course was nonsense. Yet she had not defended him, or expressed to Mary her astonishment that she, having seen him and heard him speak, could for a moment believe Mrs. Smith's contemptible gossip. The very thought of it brought a faint shade of indignant colour to Cecilia's face.

As she sat there thinking, Mary came in and told her how she had found Peter running about in the road, apparently hunting for his master, or mistress, as the case might be. He had recognised her as an old friend, and had come to her wagging his tail. She had at once picked him up in her arms, and brought him, not without struggles, to his rightful owner.

"Very well," said Cecilia. "We will take him to that new house this afternoon, and if the thief is there I will speak to him and decide it."

"He would give him up at once," suggested Mary, "if you were to pay something. He does not look as if he had too much money."

"I think you are mistaken about him altogether," replied Cecilia. "However, it is more likely that I shall let him keep the dog. There certainly will be no question of paying."

"Let him keep Peter !" exclaimed Mary, dismayed.

"Why not ? The dog loves him better than me."

There was a white glow of heat on land and sea that afternoon, when the girls and Peter walked to their favourite hollow

in the downs. The white walls of the new house had risen higher, but it all lay a silent desolation under the sun ; for some reason the workmen were not there that afternoon, neither was there any sign of the young man. Mary wandered about gathering wild flowers. Cecilia sat down in a little green nook, just out of sight of the building, and leaned back against a mossy stone, shading her eyes from the dazzling sea. Peter played about in his last year's fashion, often running out of sight of his mistress, but coming back when she called him. After about twenty minutes she heard him give a joyful bark, and rightly guessing that his new possessor was not far off, she rose to her feet, just as the artist, looking as irresponsible as ever, came round the green shoulder of the down with Peter jumping beside him. He stopped, seeing Cecilia, to whose mind his look and manner brought once more a faint, vague, ridiculous suspicion that had occurred to her once or twice already. It was quite unfounded, quite unreasonable, but it made her if possible a little more stiff and grave in her reception of the young man. She looked at the dog, who came and caressed her. The young man glanced at him too, and then Cecilia could not help smiling in answer to his look of amused inquiry.

"The dog is an old friend of mine," she said.

"So I see. I suppose all his runnings off in the last week have been to you. Before you appeared, the rascal was always at my heels."

"How long have you had him?" asked Cecilia, still stroking Peter's head.

"Not quite a year. When did you make his acquaintance?"

"O, he was a puppy of three months old."

"Really! To whom did he belong then?"

"To me. He was mine till last summer, when I lost him."

"How very odd! Then he is yours still. Were not you sitting down when I came up just now? Do oblige me by sitting down again, and telling me all about it."

Cecilia did so, and began to explain, while her companion lounged on the grass a yard or two below, and listened, and looked up at her. Peter turned his face curiously from one to the other. Cecilia appeared to be quite wrapped up in the tragic story of her dog; but that interesting problem, her companion, had already perhaps a larger place in her thoughts than even Peter. Talking with him seemed to be the easiest and pleasantest thing in the world; the perfect ease and naturalness of everything about him was delightful; just what was wanted to make happy intercourse for a shy nature like Cecilia's. She became aware, too, that his sun-browned features were very handsome and delicate, and that it was quite impossible not to respond to the smile in his pleasant eyes. It took a long time to satisfy him about the dog, which he had bought last year from a livery-stable keeper in London. Of course he must have been stolen at Herrings-hole; there were villains even in this haunt of peace: but Cecilia had to submit, and did submit very graciously, to a remonstrance on the folly of letting her dog run about with his name on his collar, which she confessed to having done through all his little life. The collar had disappeared, of course, before he came into his present master's possession; but his name had been handed on with him.

Cecilia might have said, an hour before, that Peter was the only subject which she and this young man could have in common; but she found herself almost unconsciously, and certainly without the smallest feeling of discomfort, led on to talk in a quiet agreeable manner about all sorts of things. Her neighbour had "a way with him" which would have fascinated even wiser women than Cecilia. It was a mixture of deference

to a lady whom he deeply admired, and a confidence in himself so perfect that it dignified his eccentricities, and a light careless fun which made his talk and presence like a fresh west wind in spring.

When Mary Grey, rather disturbed at her long absence from her cousin, having scrambled halfway down the cliff in search of a fern, and scrambled up again with much difficulty and some danger, was returning to the snug corner in which she had left Cecilia, she heard first a man's voice talking, and then a light-hearted happy laugh from her cousin—that pattern to young women of the century. Mary, who believed the reports of Mrs. Smith, quickened her steps in alarm, and, coming up to them, looked from one to the other in amazement. Cecilia coloured slightly, and got up at once. Her companion also moved, more slowly and unwillingly. Mary and he exchanged some little greeting, and he then turned smiling to Cecilia.

"Now, as to Peter," he said, "you must let me restore him to you. I don't feel as if I had any right to him. He is your dog, not mine."

"To whom does he belong legally?" said Cecilia.

"Upon my word, I don't know. We won't go to law about him, will we? He is your dog, that's plain. Peter, come here, you villain! Go to your mistress, and don't desert her again. Don't you think I am right?" he said to Mary.

"I really don't know. My cousin must decide," said Mary, shaking her head. Her faith in Mrs. Smith was already shaken.

"I should like you to have him," said Cecilia to the artist. "I mean it, indeed. It is no sacrifice, for he likes you better."

"Not in his heart: impossible. He is not such a fool as that, are you, Peter? Dogs always like running about after a man; but if Peter did not love you better, he would not be worth kicking. The poor fellow is puzzled just now. He

doesn't know what to make of this joint ownership ; but when you have had him a week, and he sees nothing more of me, he will be all right. This unfortunate year will be forgotten."

There was a little hesitation, a sort of sadness, in the tone of the last words. I do not know whether Cecilia noticed it. She said rather abruptly, "Let us both walk away, and the dog can follow which he likes."

The artist only answered by a smile, and set off along the cliffs. Cecilia and Mary turned their steps towards Herring-hole, and were soon aware that Peter was not following them. But in five minutes he overtook them with his chosen master.

"Now are you convinced ?" said Cecilia.

"I assure you he would forget me in a week. He is your dog. I have no right to him whatever."

"If I have a right to him I make it over to you."

"You give me the dog ?" he said, looking at her eagerly.

"If you will accept him." she answered, smiling. "After all these formalities, I hope he will have a happy home."

"I don't think he has been an unlucky dog all this year. Now he shall be a prince. I hope in time to come he may be the happiest dog in the whole world."

"That is settled. I am very glad," said Cecilia calmly.

If there was anything odd in this last aspiration of Peter's master, she did not notice it. Mary did, however, and thought him a most extraordinary young man.

He walked with them towards the town, all three talking as if they had known each other for weeks. Cecilia was quietly giving herself up to the enjoyment of the hour. Mary had decided, long before they reached the church-steps, that Mrs. Smith's disparagements were mere vulgar gossip.

"May I ask if you know who I am ?" said the stranger, before they parted.

Cecilia, looking into his smiling face, could not let herself indulge in any romantic fancies.

"We don't know exactly," she said gravely, and yet smiling herself a little. "My aunt was told that you were—acting as—agent to Lord Alderney."

"So I am; the rascal who has spoilt your favourite hollow. You will hate me for that, I'm afraid."

"I suppose an agent must do as he is told," said Cecilia.

"Ah, it is Alderney you hate—not me. That is a comfort."

He turned laughing away, Peter with him, and the girls walked on.

"He is a gentleman, Cecy, that is quite certain," said Mary. "Perhaps even a friend or relation of Lord Alderney's. I shouldn't wonder, should you?"

"No, not much," said Cecilia; but cheerful and easy as she had been in her talk with the young agent, she did not feel particularly inclined to talk about him to Mary.

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## V.

NEXT day Cecilia sent to tell her aunt and cousin that she had a headache, and was not coming down to breakfast. Mary hurried up-stairs, rather frightened, for it was never Cecilia's habit to give way to small ailments. She found her dressed and sitting by the table, her head in her hands, and two open letters before her.

"I thought you would come," said Cecilia, lifting up her face, which was pale and strained, as if she had received some heavy blow. "We must leave to-day, dear. Will your mother be very much vexed?"

"What has happened?" asked Mary, standing breathless before her. "Cecy, what is it? Where are you going? What have you heard?"

"Anywhere Aunt Sarah likes; only away from here. You may read these letters—this one first, and then mine."

Mary took the first, staring at it rather stupidly. She did not know the hand, and for several moments the meaning did not dawn upon her. Then her eyes grew very round, and her face took a more and more astonished expression. Cecilia did not watch her, but leaned forward again with her head in her hands, waiting.

The letter in Mary's hand was a proposal, and one of a most eccentric kind. It began, "Dear Miss Latham—" and went on to tell Cecilia that there was only one real way of making Peter a happy dog for life, and that was, her giving herself also to his present owner. The whole letter was written in this careless half-joking style. Its ending was something of this kind:

"In writing to you on such a serious subject, I dare not keep up my beloved incognito. The house in the hollow is mine, and I am my own agent. May I hope that you will become reconciled to both of us?—Yours, with sincere devotion,

"ALDERNEY."

"Gracious, Cecy! Have you answered?" gasped Mary, having at length taken in the full meaning of this letter.

Cecilia held out another sheet without speaking.

"Not sent it yet?"

"No; I thought I would show it to you first, that you might know. I shall not alter it," said Cecilia.

As the formality of her manners perhaps showed, Cecilia was not a person of distinguished family, and, in spite of her

fortune, had been little in society. Her answer to the easy young aristocrat, who had presumed to ask so much on such a slight acquaintance, and in a style so terribly trifling, was likely to be a lesson to him. Its stiffness and pride were something unequalled, probably, in his experience.

“ My Lord,—Your most unexpected letter has astonished me more than I can say. I must, of course, thank you for the honour you do me, begging you at the same time to dismiss all thought of me at once from your mind. I am not a person of your rank, and if that was not enough, your letter shows me how utterly unsuited we should be to each other. I have been brought up to regard such things seriously. We shall not meet again, as I leave Herringshore to-day, and I must request you to take this as a final answer.—Your obedient servant,

“ CECILIA LATHAM.”

“ Poor man ! ” said Mary, having mastered this effusion. “ How angry you are ! Do you really mean to send him this savage letter ? ”

“ Certainly,” said Cecilia, getting up, and colouring scarlet. “ He deserves it. His letter is almost insolent,—condescending, flippant, conceited ; he thinks the smallest hint will make me fall down and worship his lordship. I wish I had never seen him. I wish the dog had been lost a hundred times. How did he find out my name ? Is this the consequence of my being barely civil to him yesterday ? Don’t you see his arrogance, Mary ? If he had been only an agent he would not have dared to write me such a letter. I suppose, it would not be possible to write anything colder ; but if I could I would. Well, what do you want to say ? ”

“ It was rather snobbish, perhaps,” Mary confessed. “ But look here ; need you say this—‘ I am not a person of your rank ’ ? ”

"Isn't it true?"

"True! yes, in a sense. After all, though, Cecy, I have heard you say yourself that a nobleman was only a gentleman with a title."

"Well, well, I am not in a humour for arguing," said Cecilia impatiently. "I wish to show him that I see the barrier between us just as well as he does. Don't be stupid, Mary. Can't you see? He thinks he can jump over obstacles with a joke. Fancy his proposing himself in that style to a duke's daughter! If he cared for me to listen to him, he should have treated me like a duke's daughter."

"These written things are always unfortunate," sighed Mary.

"Detestable!"

"I am sorry he has made such a mess of it, though, for I thought him charming yesterday; and surely you did too?"

"Go and ask Aunt Sarah where she would like to go. I will send my letter, and come down presently."

"May I tell her?"

"O yes, I suppose you must. But no one else, mind."

So this visit of theirs to Herringshole was a very short one, and this time Cecilia resolved quite firmly that she would never go there again. They wandered about to two or three other places that summer, but without enjoying themselves. Mrs. Grey, and Mary too in her heart, thought that Cecilia had acted madly, and Cecilia's own manner went some way to justify them in this opinion. She moved about in a heavy spiritless way, as if a cloud had gathered over her life; she seemed to care no more for all its pleasant things. And once more Peter's name was banished from the lips of his old friends.

## VI.

IT would seem that this fine fellow, Lord Alderney, believed Herringshole to be a corner of enchanted ground, where precious stones grew on trees, to be plucked when it pleased him ; where an offer of marriage, the most important negotiation of a lifetime, could be managed in the same careless holiday fashion as everything else there. If he thought so, he was sadly mistaken, and Cecilia's letter, in its old-fashioned severity, brought him to his senses at once. He saw his error with painful plainness, for he really believed that his happiness depended on marrying this charming young Philistine, and he did not despair even now, though his first approaches had failed so signally. He frowned over Cecilia's letter, which seemed so unlike herself, then recovered his excellent temper and burst out laughing. Finally he locked the letter up, determined not to look at it again till his object was gained. He never doubted, being quite used to success, that the day would come when Cecilia and he would laugh over it together. In the meantime she had run away, and he did not at once run after her.

In the following spring Cecilia, being tired of London, took a picturesque old house at Thames Ditton, and moved there in April with Mrs. Grey and Mary. Cecilia was a good deal altered. She was paler and thinner ; the first impression she made was a sad one, and this in itself was a great change. However, after a few days in her new home, she began to brighten up a little. She enjoyed the young grass and leaves and flowers, the clear skies, the flying showers, the singing of birds in the elms that shaded her garden. The garden itself became an interest to her, and her faithful Mary was glad, though the



grave middle-aged way in which Cecy gave orders to the gardener was painful to her ears.

One afternoon Cecilia was standing on her lawn, admiring a bed of red and white tulips just in flower, and watched by her aunt and cousin from the drawing room window, when wonderful things suddenly began to happen. She was embraced by the paws of Peter, who had rushed under the garden-gate. He was barking, dancing, scratching, seizing her hand and licking it, springing from the ground with the ambition of kissing her face.

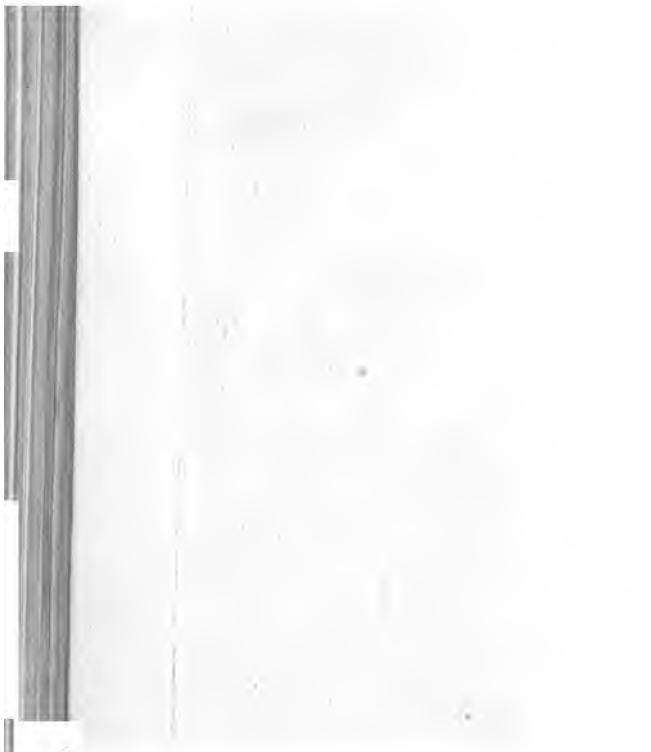
"O, Peter, can it be you!" she cried; and if joy ever sounded in a woman's voice, it did in hers then.

She had stooped to caress her old pet, and when she lifted her head, there was his master standing close behind him, bare-headed, and looking at her in a sort of desperate anxiety. Cecilia blushed deeply and stood still. All her self-possession had left her for the moment; she really could not move or



'I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU ALL THIS TIME TO EXPLAIN.'

W. S. A.





speak, but felt as if she had been suddenly whisked up into the clouds—or rather into the brilliant sky that was shining behind the elm-trees.

"Will you forgive me?" said Lord Alderney. "I have been looking for you all this time, to explain—and—down, Peter!"

Cecilia put her hand into his; somehow words did not seem to be needed. He held it very fast, and the dog danced round them both quite frantically.

There was no necessity to explain to Mrs. Grey and Mary, who saw the course of events with great joy from the window.

The evening before her marriage, Cecilia told Mary that dream which had given her a fancy to see Herringshore again. She thought she was walking alone over the downs, looking for Peter, and in her favourite hollow she found a palace shining in the sun. It might have been in the *Arabian Nights*. It was built of white and coloured marble, and the windows were all set with precious stones, which flashed back glorious colours to the sun and the sea. Inside the walls she heard a dog barking, and felt sure it was Peter; but she wandered round and round without finding any entrance, till suddenly she saw a tall gate standing open, and a young prince with a crown on his head, all dressed in blue, walking out with Peter beside him. They took no notice of her, but walked on down to the beach, and she followed them. There was a boat on the sand, just afloat, for the tide was high. The prince and the dog stepped on board, she still following them, though they did not seem to see her, and the boat put off upon the summer sea; she sitting in the stern, Peter in the bow, and the prince between them, rowing. She became aware that he was looking at her earnestly, and knew that he was going to speak. Her heart beat, for she did not know what he would say. But just as his lips moved she awoke and it was only a dream.

## HOW I SET ABOUT PAYING MY DEBTS.

*In Oxford Story.*

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"NOW my dear Frank," said my father, replenishing his glass the while with some very particular port the old butler had brought out that evening in my honour, "as you start for Oxford early to-morrow, I may as well say now what little I wish to say to you respecting the important step you are about taking in entering university life."

I helped myself to some filberts and listened attentively.

"The social advantages of the university," continued my father, "are, I hold, of very great importance; but I do not wish you to sacrifice its educational advantages to—to—its—ahem!—"

"Oh, no! certainly not," I interposed (somewhat vaguely, perhaps).

"So I shall expect you to take your degree in the usual course: if as a mere pass-man, well and good; if with honours, all the better. Although you will not have to earn your bread (in the accepted use of the term), you will find such advantages of service."

I assented to all this, inwardly deriving no small consolation from the fact that I should not be *obliged* to encounter any examination at once, as my matriculation had already been triumphantly accomplished.

"I shall allow you £500 a year and the expenses of a horse," added my father; "and I shall give orders for you to be supplied with some sound and wholesome wine. On this sum I shall expect you to live without incurring any debts. If you do run into debt, you must discharge all such liabilities out of your own earnings."

One of my father's great characteristics was firmness. His was genuine firmness, and it had nothing to do with its weak counterfeit, obstinacy. I knew that he meant what he had said about my paying all debts by my own earnings, and that it had not been added merely for the purpose of giving weight to his warning, or seasoning his advice with the condiment called "solemn chaff." Of course I had no intention then of incurring debts; but I felt that I should have to accept the alternative if I did.

A few words shall dismiss my university experiences. Five hundred a year, with the expenses of a horse (to this a servant was added), and a gratuitous supply of wine, seemed in contemplation a mine of wealth that would be fully equal to all my necessities. So, relying on the plenitude of my resources, I started a second horse, and even a third during the hunting-season. I liked (in common with all other Oxonians I ever made acquaintance with) easy-chairs and luxurious furniture. I was fond of looking at handsomely-bound books, if I did not read them very carefully; and good pictures I had quite a passion for. In music I took great delight; so a grand piano-forte, hired at a rate that would have paid its price once a year formed a conspicuous feature in my rooms. All these likings (and many others of an expensive nature might be added), together with a great taste for pleasant and genial society, sufficed to render my career an expensive one. One thing I can conscientiously aver: if money was wasted thoughtlessly on capricious whims and pleasures, it was not wasted on any

pursuits that could be condemned as vicious. The result of all this expenditure may be easily guessed.

I was never ploughed; but in those periodical encounters with the examiners the university rules obliged me to engage in I may say that the former always died game. Never shall I forget those last final rounds, conducted across that awful green table, when all one's mental pugilistic science was brought into play to make a very partial knowledge reach the whole length of a subject; while enthusiastic friends, with mistaken kindness, looked on in breathless silence, and encouraged me with smiling glances or imaginary pats on the back, as I turned towards them with a sickly smile of recognition, and hollow pretence of being quite at my ease.

But the time came when all these ordeals had been safely passed, and I was going to "put on my gown" next degree day. So I sent round to collect my various bills, determining to be business-like, and to arrive at an exact knowledge of my position. After some persuasion, the coy tradesmen sent in their bills, not to ask for payment, but pledges as it were of their confidence in my honour and solvency. After two or three efforts in addition (compound) that brought each time varying results, I arrived at the conclusion that I owed nearly £800. My father's words recurred to me, not by any means for the first time, and I set myself to wondering how I could earn this amount. Literature—the writing of a successful novel that should accomplish the whole matter as by the magic of a fairy's wand—was the first idea that presented itself, as I believe it does to very many others under similar circumstances. I dismissed the thought as impracticable. A brighter one succeeded. I would get a tutorship. Many men of my acquaintance had done so. Certainly they were usually "honours" men, and not heirs to baronetcies and ten or twenty thousand a year. But I might seek one in the guise of an ordinary B. A., and none need know that my

prospects in life pointed to the possession of a very old title, and far-spreading estates in two western counties, not to mention a street in Mayfair and a house in Belgravia.

"But you will want testimonials, and that sort of thing, you know," said Hatfield, of Baliol, with whom I was discussing my plans over a cigar.

"Grantham, my coach, will manage that for me, I have no doubt," I answered.

"Well, if you get any decent thing, or keep it for two months, I'm in for a plough," he observed.

Bearing these words in mind, it was with a feeling of justifiable pride that, a few mornings after, I carried some half-a-dozen letters in my hand to his rooms, where I was going to breakfast. I had called at the Union on my way, to look at the letter-rack; and I must confess to a feeling of considerable surprise when I beheld there sundry missives bearing the mystic initials I had adopted in my advertisement in the "Guardian."

"By return of post, too!" I inwardly exclaimed. "Parents must take the bait very easily, or tutors must be scarce." I hurried away, as I was late, without opening the letters, reserving this pleasing task for Hatfield's rooms and presence.

"Is it a dun that I see before me?" cried that gentleman, as I entered, letters in hand.

"Behold the triumphs of advertising and education!" I rejoined, showing the letters in triumph.

Alas! they were all circulars from agents who would be happy to place X. Q.'s name on their registers, &c. &c.

I looked rather blank, as I had no fancy for prosecuting my search after employment in this manner.

"There is no harm in it, you know," said Hatfield; "but, of course, unless a man is all honours he cannot pick and choose, and you must take what they send you, or get nothing at all."

But I was not reduced to this; for Grantham, to whom I had

confided my plan, called at my rooms during the day, and offered a solution of the difficulty.

"If you are really in earnest about this, I think I know of a thing that will exactly suit you. It is to prepare a young fellow for Oxford. They want a man who is a gentleman, up to the work, and fond of country sports, hunting, &c. But what would your father say to your taking a private tutorship? Does he know of your plan?"

"It is the result of an agreement between us respecting my running into debt," I explained. "I shall write and tell him what I have done when I have undertaken an engagement."

"But, if Sir Grahame objects, would you throw a place up?"

"He would not allow me to act dishonourably," I answered; "and were I engaged I must accept the consequences."

"Very well: if you are determined to risk it, I can offer you a tutorship in the family of a General Gawston, of Gawston Flats, Norfolk, where you will have one pupil to look after, be resident in the house, and receive a salary at the rate of £150 a year. They are in want of a man immediately."

I caught at the bait, and in return it caught me. My father, to whom I wrote at once, to communicate my having entered into this engagement, replied that, had he been consulted prior to my binding myself, he would not have consented to such a plan; but that now, as the engagement was already formed, I must fulfil it; at all events until another tutor could be found. I had been imprudent in accepting a situation not befitting my station; but I must now abide by my imprudence, &c.

There was one thing in favour of my concealing my real position in life while at Gawston Flats. My father, once Sir Grahame Luxton, had several years before assumed the additional name of Penreston on coming into a large property, left by a distant relative, on the condition of his taking the name. This condition did not bind the children, however; and so my sisters

and myself were Luxtons, as we preferred retaining the name of our ancestors, a more ancient and honourable one too, by-the-by, as my father always took care to impress on us.

I determined not to visit Luxton Court before leaving for Gawston Flats, as I must confess that, now my plan of getting a tutorship was accomplished, I felt an unacknowledged regret that I had so easily succeeded; and I sometimes wished I had set about paying my debts in a different way. Feeling that the home air and style at Luxton would hardly suit me under the circumstances, and possibly fearing some banter from my father, I left Oxford as soon as I could; and in a few days I was driving across the country (flat and uninteresting to my western eyes) that led from Mudhole station to Gawston Flats.

On my arrival about half-past five in the evening, I was ushered at once to my bedroom, and I sat down by the acceptable fire to have a good warm. All at once the thought came into my mind, "How about going down to dinner? Is the tutor usually there? Does he wear full dress? The servant said nothing about dinner time." Solving these questions by the reflection that a tutor was still a gentleman, and feeling hungry, I determined to dress and go down. So I rang for my portmanteau, and found that Colonel Gawston dined at seven.

It was dark when I had arrived, but a hurried glance had shown me that the place was evidently a gentleman's; and this impression was confirmed when I wandered down about a quarter to seven, and beat about among some doors in the hall for that one which belonged to the drawing-room. Taking a lucky shot at one with a white handle, I entered a large, well-lighted room. A lady, not unpleasant looking, but dressed very severely in black velvet, rose from a chair near the fire.

"Mr. Luxton, I presume," she said, rising.

I bowed, deriving some comfort from the fact that she betrayed no surprise at seeing me.

"Colonel Gawston has only just come in, or he would have seen you before," she continued, after shaking hands with me. "You must have had a cold journey; pray take that chair by the fire."

I did so, and we chatted on very easily until the master of the house joined us just as dinner was announced. He greeted me very pleasantly—perhaps just a little stiffly—and then I gave Mrs. Gawston my arm, and we went in to dinner. I cannot say I felt quite at my ease in my new position; but this did not interfere with my appetite, and dinner passed off with sufficient conversation going on between the courses.

"Mr. Luxton, you will take some more port?" said Colonel Gawston, as he filled his glass, and drew his chair near the fire, on the departure of his wife for the drawing-room. I followed his example in each respect.

"We have never had a resident tutor before," he continued; "and we are anxious to make you as comfortable as we can. We shall always be glad of your company at dinner at seven, if you prefer dining late, but we hope you will quite consult your own inclination about that. Your pupil you will see when we go to the drawing-room, I expect. He remained out longer than I did. To-morrow we can arrange further details, as may seem necessary."

I shall never forget my first morning over the books with my new pupil. He was a very nice boy, but with a far too conversational tendency, I thought, as I tried hard to keep his mind (and my own) fixed on the work in hand. He would break off suddenly from some heartrending *ταλασ ἔγω* passage to ask me if I had kept horses at Oxford, or if the proctors had ever been down on me. Once or twice I found myself tripping, and only too ready to run on into the unclassical conversation such questions suggested, while Horace and Euripides lay open, but forgotten before us.

"Florence is coming this evening," he said one morning about a week after my arrival, as he was finding the place (always a long business), before commencing to translate.

"Who?" I asked.

"Florence; my sister, you know. It is always jollier when she is here. You ought to see her ride. Most girls are great muffs, I think; but she isn't a bit."

I heard a little more of Florence, but I did not see her until dinner-time. We had taken our seats when she entered, and hurriedly took a chair opposite me. Mrs. Gawston murmured the customary words, and we bowed across the table. The conversation was general, as our party was so small. Miss Gawston, who I found was grown up, and not the somewhat hoydenish young lady her brother's description had led me to expect, joined in it freely, and we found several things to say to one another across the table. I thought her extremely pleasant, I remember, and remarkably pretty. She seemed about nineteen, and had just returned, I found, to my horror from a visit to some friends in the west.

"My daughter tells me she met some Miss Luxtons while she was away. Are they any relations of yours?" asked Mrs. Gawston. I may say that that lady and I were on very pleasant terms; but I had every evening to encounter the severity of black velvet (I used to wonder whether she had but one dress), and to feel my teeth on edge if by any chance my hand touched her robe as we marched in to dinner.

"The daughters of Sir Grahame Penreston," explained Miss Gawston.

I felt very red as I explained that they (being really my sisters) were connections, and then I made a vigorous effort to change the conversation.

As the Colonel and I entered the drawing-room Miss Gawston, seated at the pianoforte, was playing the *Largo Apassionato*,

from Beethoven's Second Pianoforte Sonata. "O, pray do not stop," I cried, as she paused on our entrance ; "that movement is more than beautiful." Thus pressed, she continued, then on to the *Scherzo*, and lastly the brilliant *Rondo* in splendid style. I was delighted.

" You are fond of music," she said.

" Very."

" You play, perhaps, or sing ?"

" I play the violin, and I sing to a certain extent." I was longing for her to ask me to bring my violin down. I saw a music-volume close by labelled "Violin and Pianoforte." Mrs. Gawston sat funereal, statuesque, and immovable. Colonel Gawston was asleep, and his son was reading Mayne Reid's something or other. Miss Gawston was trifling with the keys, possibly she feared asking the tutor such a thing. I was desperate. "Shall I fetch my violin and music," I said. Without waiting for an answer I went. The next moment we had commenced, and during the evening we played together, and then, emboldened by this beginning, we sang together. What happens once usually happens twice, and the next evening we occupied ourselves in the same way. Not always only in the evening though, but many a stray half-hour during the day we found time for a little music. Then, also, she rode very well ; and as her brother and I rode almost daily, we often found ourselves taking the same direction ; so altogether I saw a good deal of Miss Gawston.

Need I tell the result ? Before a fortnight was over I was deeply in love, and my intention of recommending Colonel Gawston to look out for another tutor was unfulfilled. We often met before dinner in the library, where there was a large Japanese screen that shut out the door. Moving very slowly towards the room one evening near dinner time, I overheard some words that made me pause before entering, and cough

violently, if not affectedly, in order that my presence might be known.

"Ahem! my dear"—the voice was Colonel Gawston's—"don't you think, my dear, that Mr. Luxton is—ahem—rather, just a little, perhaps not prudently, intimate with Florence?"

"I have thought so, certainly," responded his wife; "and I was very glad this morning to receive an invitation from Lady Fitz-Pedigry for her, as it will take her away at once. I have accepted it for her, and I thought of going with her to town to-morrow or the day after to see Madame Valenciennes, as she——"

At this moment I interrupted the good lady by entering the room, disconcerting her rather by my sudden appearance.

The words I had overheard determined me to learn my fate from Miss Gawston before she left, as I felt that, under any circumstances, it was impossible for me to stay much longer at Gawston Flats in my present false position. If I could not gain a personal interview I determined to write to her; and that night I wrote a candid letter, which I purposed sending her if no opportunity for private conversation presented itself. But fate was kind, and the next morning I met Miss Gawston accidentally in the garden about an hour before breakfast-time. The result was that she did not appear at breakfast, and that when we rose from that meal I requested a few minutes' private conversation with the Colonel. Never shall I forget his look of indignant amazement when he learnt that his son's tutor had proposed to his daughter, and that with success.

"Mr. Luxton, when I engaged you," he said, "there was one thing I was assured of most emphatically, and that was that you were a gentleman. This is not the conduct of a gentleman to enter my house, to undermine the affections of my daughter, to entrap her into an engagement! Sir, you should have thrown up your situation here rather than have done this."

I felt he had justice on his side. As far as he knew, I was nothing but a penniless suitor who had abused his peculiar position by using the many opportunities it afforded him of making love to a young lady, a reputed heiress of apparently superior social rank. I could not help being amused, nevertheless, as I reflected how different his tone would have been had he known all. Something prompted me not to tell him yet, but to go on pressing my suit without advancing at once the real claims I had to back it. We were still in the midst of the discussion, the matter was seemingly going hopelessly against me, when a sharp knock at the door interrupted our debate. "Come in," said the Colonel, impatiently. A servant entered with a note. It was a telegram calling the Colonel at once to town on important business, military, I think he said.

"Mr. Luxton, I must postpone this matter until my return," he said, hastily, looking at his watch. "I have not more than ten minutes to spare. I appeal to your honour not to make any unfair use of this unfortunate interruption." He passed out of the room. A new idea struck me, and I followed quickly.

"I had thought of going to town this afternoon for the night, and Rupert expressed a wish to accompany me," I said; "will you allow him to do so?"

"Certainly," said the Colonel, looking relieved. "If you wish it, you might remain away longer, not necessarily in town of course; merely letting Mrs. Gawston know where Rupert is."

"Rupert, do you mind just coming with me to Belgrave Square first," I said to my pupil as we alighted from the train.

"Oh, no," was the reply, and so we were soon rattling away in a hansom to my father's town house.

"Surely that's you," said Rupert, looking at a photograph lying on the table in the drawing-room, where we were waiting for my father to appear.

"Yes, I am friendly here," I replied, getting red. "If you

will take a book for five minutes I shall have transacted my business with Sir Grahame." I moved towards the door just as it opened, and the master of the house walked in.

"My dear Frank, I hardly expected to see you," he said, as he entered. "You are looking very well indeed, in spite of your teaching labours. I hope you have thrown that foolish engagement up." He stopped as he caught sight of Rupert.

"Let me introduce my pupil to you," I said.

"You will both dine here to-night, of course, and sleep," said my father, shaking hands with Rupert. "I am going to Luxton to-morrow by the 11.45 train; couldn't you come too? A change will do you good, and your sisters will be delighted to see you. They are under the impression that you are abroad, and I have not undeceived them. You will join us too, I hope, Mr. Gawston."

It was so arranged, and the next day we started for Luxton. In the meanwhile Rupert had, with some wonder (but he was too well-bred a boy to make many remarks), asked me if Sir Grahame Penreston was my father, and I saw him writing a letter that evening, probably to his mother or sister. I felt very much disposed to write to the latter, but I determined to wait until we reached Luxton. It is hardly necessary to say that, without abusing the Colonel's appeal to my honour, I had managed to let Florence know before I left that the obstacles in our way were not as insuperable as they appeared.

Arrived at Luxton Court, I wrote to Mrs. Gawston, having previously enlightened my father as to the true state of affairs. The Gawstons, if not as ancient a family as ours, were eminently respectable, and my father, who could make no objections, was pleased to be unmerciful in the way of banter. "A fine way to pay your debts indeed!" he concluded by saying. "I called on my father in town," I wrote in my letter to Mrs. Gawston, "and he gave us an invitation down here, which I took the liberty to

accept. Rupert and I propose staying here two nights before returning again to the Flats. Enclosed is a letter to Miss Gawston, which I hope you will not object to hand over to her, and I trust that you will all pardon the slight deception I have practised on you," &c. The letter was given to Miss Gawston, and, as the reader may conclude, no further objections were made to our engagement. Before three months were over we were married.

"And how about the debts?" does any one ask.

Well, my father paid them.

THE END.

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